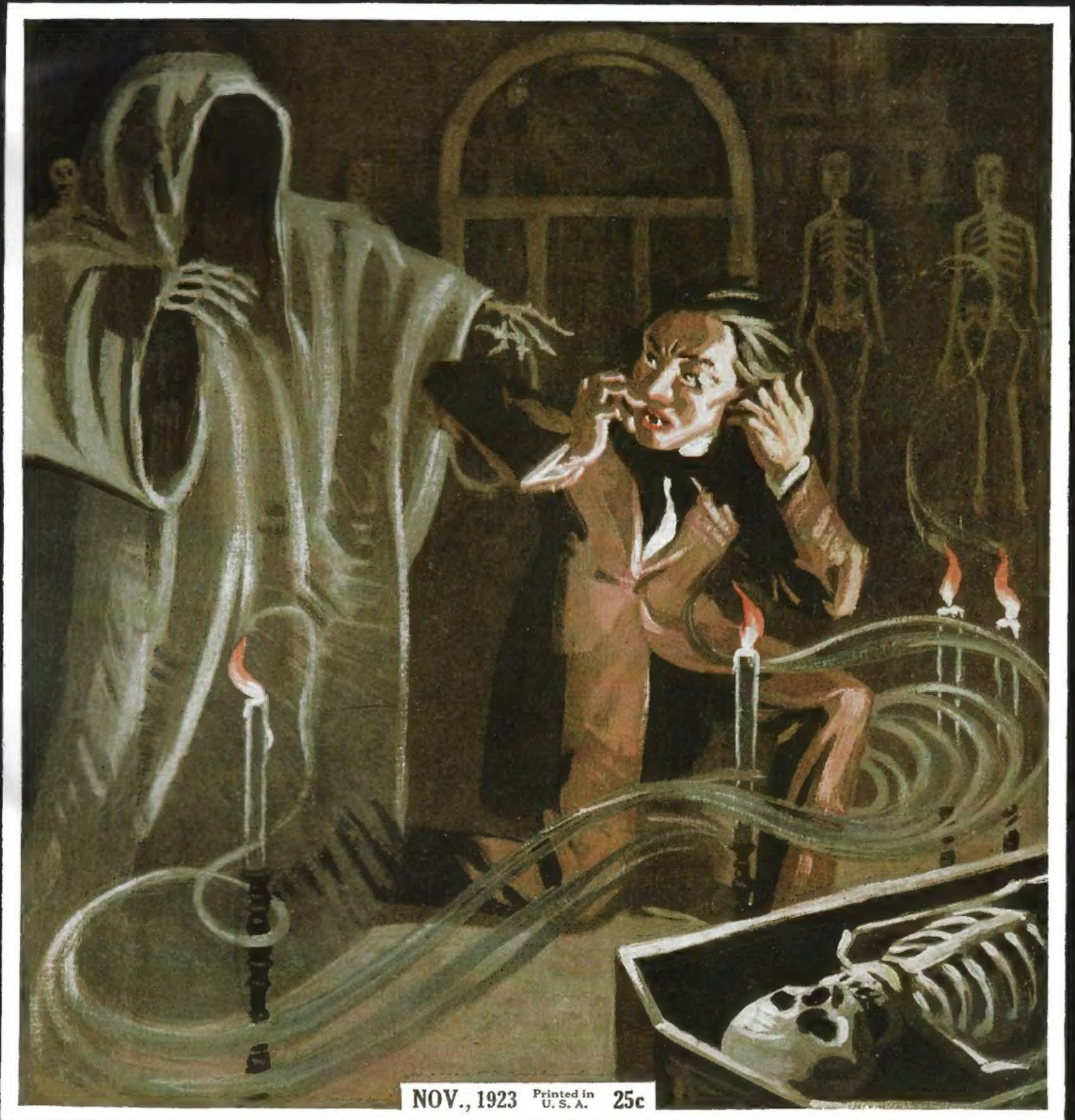
Weird Tales

THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE



NOV., 1923 Printed in U. S. A. 25c

Radio Course FREE My new $45.00 Radio Course given free when you enroll for the Electrical Course—Mail Coupon.

Get Ready For a Big Pay Job

Be an Electrical Expert

Men like you are needed right now to fill big-paying jobs in the electrical field. There never was a time when opportunities for money-making were as good as they are now. Good jobs are open everywhere to men who know "what's what." Electrical Experts earn from $12 to $30 a day. Even the ordinary electricians get top-notch pay. Why don't you get in on this and get a real man's size job now? With my simplified Electrical Course I can quickly fit you to hold one. Read W. E. Pence's letter below. This is only one of thousands of such letters I have received.

Earn $75 to $200 a Week

You Can Be a Big Money Maker

I have trained over 20,000 men in electricity—thousands of successful men all over the world attribute their success to my training. I can make you successful too. In fact I will guarantee your success. If you will follow my home study course you can become an expert, drawing a fat salary, in the same time it takes you to get a little raise in the work you are doing now.

Jumps From $125 A Month to $750 and Over

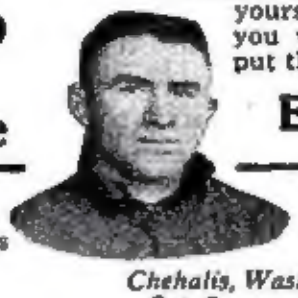
READ the Story of W. E. Pence

Age or Lack of Education No Handicap

No matter how old or how young you are, or what education you have, there is a real future for you in electricity. If you can read and write I can put you on the road to success. I can help you to a position that will make people admire you and look up to you.

Cash In on Your Spare Time

Use your spare time to get a better job. Most of us have enough spare time every day to sell a little at about $10.00 an hour. Sell some to yourself at this price. Watch how quick you will earn the money back if you put the time into study.



W. E. Pence
in his working togs

Chehalis, Wash., Oct. 9.

Mr Cooke:—

When I enrolled with you less than a year ago I was a common mechanic earning $25 to $30 a week. Today I am an "Electrical Expert" with a business of my own that gives me a clear profit of over $750 a month.

I have more work than I can do. The people around Chehalis come to me to fix their starters, generators and ignition troubles because they know that I know how to do it right.

My success, I owe to you, Mr. Cooke. The thorough practical training which you gave me through your Easily-learned Home Study Course in Electricity has made me an independent, highly respected business man in this community. Sincerely yours, W. E. Pence.

Electrical Working Outfit Free

Every man who enrolls for my electrical course gets a big outfit of tools, material and instruments free. This includes an electric motor and other things not usually found in a beginners outfit. These are the same tools and the same material you will use later in your work. Everything practical and good right from the start.

I Guarantee Your Complete Satisfaction

I am so sure I can make a big pay electrical expert out of you that I guarantee your success. I agree under bond to return every cent you pay me for tuition when you have finished the course, if you are not satisfied that it is the best investment you have ever made. If you don't make good, this million dollar institution will.

Act Right Now

Let me send you my big free book giving details of the opportunities electricity offers you and a sample lesson also free. Mail the coupon and get this at once. Learn how other men "got themselves ready to hold good paying jobs" and how I can help you do the same. This is your big chance—take it.

L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer
CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS, Dept. 179
2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago

L. L. Cooke
Chief Engineer, Chicago Engineering Works,
Dept. 179, 2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Send at once Sample Lessons, your Big Book, and full particulars of your Free Outfit and Home Study Course —all fully prepaid without obligation on my part.

Name.....

Address.....

I Tell You

This Free Book Will Show You The Way to Amazing Salary Increases

I only ask that you risk two cents on the strength of my word that the contents of this amazing book will show you the way to a prosperity that you never dreamed possible, in a fascinating field that you never thought of entering. This book is now free. Read my offer.

By J. E. GREENSLADE

Read What They Did

$9000 First Year

Ellis Sumner Cook, 20 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, left a $25 a week job and last year made $9,000!

$100 a Month to $100 a Week in Only 3 Months

H. D. Miller, another Chicago boy, was making $100 a *month* as a stenographer in July, 1922. In September, 3 months later, he was making $100 a *week* as a salesman.

$150 to $500 a Month

W. P. Clenny of Kansas City, Mo., stepped from a $150 a month clerkship into a selling job at $500 a month. He is making $850 a month now.

$6500 a Year

M. V. Stephens of Albany, Ky., was making $25 a week. He took up this training and now makes 5 times that much.

Small Pay to Big Earnings

J. H. Cash of Atlanta, Ga., exchanged his $75 a month job for one which pays him $500 a month.

Now Sales Manager at $10,000 a Year

O. H. Malfroot of Boston, Mass., stepped into a $10,000 position as a SALES MANAGER—so thorough is this training. All these successes are due to this easy, fascinating and rapid way to master certain invincible secrets of selling.

FIRST, let me ask you two questions. One: Do you consider that you are as intelligent as the average mail-clerk, farmhand, office clerk, mechanic or bookkeeper? I ask you this because most of the men whose salaries have been jumped are just ordinary, every-day sort of men.

Second: If you suddenly found yourself with all the money you needed to spend, wearing the best clothes, living in the finest neighborhood, driving a good car and belonging to the best clubs—but having to make good in a job that paid $10,000 a year, would it scare you? There are men to whom $10,000 a year is so much that the idea of earning it themselves never occurs to them. They will always be in routine jobs at low pay. Their dreams will never come true. But yours will if you will absorb what I am going to tell you. For my work in life is to take ordinary men from blind-alley jobs and show them how they can quickly make more money than they ever dreamed possible. And if you will give me a chance I'm going to show you how it's done!

Now, in one quick step, you can fairly jump from low pay to magnificent earnings. You can enter the field where opportunities in your favor are ten to one—the Selling field. You know, don't you, that Salesmen top the list of money-makers—that the salesman is his own boss—that his work is fascinating, interesting and highly profitable? But the thing you doubt is your own ability. All right, but you can become a first-class, money-making salesman in an amazingly easy way.

Proof That Salesmen Are Made—Not "Born"

You might laugh if I told you that in a few weeks or months you could be making good in a big way in the Selling field. Thousands before you have laughed—perhaps bitterly—at the idea, but many of these thousands are now making big money as salesmen.

The story of six men who once thought salesmen were "born," who did not believe they were "cut out for selling," is on this page.

Thousands of men like these six—men who had never sold a dime'n worth of goods in their lives—men who formerly thought salesmen were "born," are now enjoying magnificent earnings in the selling field. Formerly they were bookkeepers, mechanics, farmers, clerks—even doctors, lawyers and ministers—but in a few months after writing to the National Salesmen's Training Association they were out in the field selling—and making more money than they had ever hoped to make in their former vocations.

Sounds remarkable, doesn't it? Yet there is nothing remarkable about it—salesmanship is governed by rules and laws. There is a certain way of saying and doing things, and again way of approaching a prospect to get his undivided attention, certain ways to overcome objections, batter down prejudice, overcome competition and make the prospect act.

Just as you learned the alphabet, so you can learn salesmanship. And through the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION METHOD—an exclusive feature of the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training—you gain actual experience while studying.

The NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION METHOD gives you experience and knowledge that will enable you to overcome sales obstacles of all descriptions easily. It is one of the many reasons why N. S. T. A. members make good salesmen right from the start.

A Lifetime of Selling Experience in a Few Weeks—Then Success

No matter what you are doing now, I can prove to you that you can gain years of selling experience in a few weeks—that you can go out and successfully sell goods—that you can make more money than you ever dreamed possible.

The N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service will enable you to quickly step into the ranks of successful salesmen—will give you a big advantage over those who lack this training. It will enable you to jump from small pay to a real man's income.

Remarkable Book, "Modern Salesmanship," Sent FREE

With my compliments I want to send you a most remarkable book, "Modern Salesmanship." It will portray to you the wonderful opportunities in the selling field for you.

It will show you how you can easily become a Master Salesman—a big money-maker—how the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training through the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION METHOD will give you years of selling experience in a few weeks; how our FREE Employment Service will help select and secure a good selling position when you are qualified and ready. And it will give you success stories of former outline workers who are now earning amazing salaries as salesmen. Mail the coupon today for the interesting FREE book. It may be the turning-point in your life.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION
Dept. 109-S Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Association,
Dept. 109-S Chicago, Ill.

I simply want to see the facts. Send me free your book, "Modern Salesmanship," and Proof that I can become a Master Salesman.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

Age_____ Occupation_____

Weird Tales, The Unique Magazine, November, 1923. Vol. 2. No. 4. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879, by The Rural Publishing Corp., 325 N. Capitol Ave., Indianapolis, Ind. *Copyright, 1923 by The Rural Publishing Corp. Manufactured in U. S. A.*

This superb 110-piece Set, with initial in 2 places on every piece, decorated in blue and gold with gold covered handles, consists of:

12 Dinner Plates, 9 inches
12 Breakfast Plates, 7 in.
12 Soup Plates, 7¾ in.
12 Cups
12 Saucers
12 Cereal Dishes, 6 inches
12 Fruit Dishes, 5¾ inches
12 Individual Bread and Butter Plates, 6¾ in.
1 Platter, 13½ inches
1 Platter, 11¾ inches
1 Celery Dish, 8¾ inches
1 Sauce Boat Tray, 7¾ in.
1 Butter Plate, 6 inches
1 Vegetable Dish, 10½ inches, with lid (2 pieces)
1 Deep Bowl, 8¾ inches
1 Oval Baker, 9 inches
1 Small Deep Bowl, 5 inches
1 Gravy Boat, 7¾ inches
1 Creamer
1 Sugar Bowl with cover (2 pieces)

$1 Brings This 110-Piece Martha Washington Blue and Gold Decorated DINNER SET

Send only $1.00 and Hartman will ship the complete set. *Use it for 30 days on Free Trial.* Then, if not satisfied, send it back and Hartman will return your $1.00 and pay transportation charges both ways. If you keep it, TAKE NEARLY A YEAR TO PAY—a little every month.

Your Initial in Gold, Surrounded by Wreath of Gold, in 2 Places on Every Piece (Gold Covered Handles)

Beautiful Colonial Martha Washington shape. All handles are of solid design and are covered with gold. Every piece decorated with a rich gold band edge, a mazarine blue follow band and 2 pure gold initials in Old English design with gold wreaths. Beautiful white lustrous body. Guaranteed first quality; no "seconds."

FREE *Beautiful Centerpiece, Six Dainty Doilies to Match and 6 Silver Plate Knives and Forks*

We want to prove to 50,000 more customers that Hartman gives the best merchandise, biggest values and most liberal terms ever known. And to get these 50,000 new customers at once we send FREE a 36-inch "Indian Head" linene centerpiece; 6 dainty doilies, 12 inches in diameter, to match; 6 extra silver plated knives and 6 extra silver plated forks, fleur-de-lis pattern. Only 50,000 will be given FREE with the Dinner Set—so act quick. Send the coupon—now!

Order No. 320EEMA21. Bargain Price, $32.85. Pay $1.00 Now. Balance $3.75 Monthly.

The Centerpiece, 6 Dainty Doilies to Match and 6 Silver Plate Knives and 6 Forks are FREE

FREE Gifts with Catalog Orders

FREE BARGAIN CATALOG FREE GIFTS

316 pages of the most astounding bargains in furniture, rugs, carpets, sewing machines, silverware—everything for the home; also farm machinery, etc.—*all sold on our easy monthly payment terms and 30 days' free trial.* Also explains Hartman's gift plan by which you receive many splendid articles such as glassware, dishes, silverware, tablecloths, napkins, etc., absolutely FREE—your purchase. Send a postal for this big free bargain catalog today.

"Let Hartman Feather YOUR Nest"

Hartman Furniture & Carpet Co.
Dept. 5775 Chicago, Illinois

Print Initial You Want Here

Enclosed find $1. Send me the 110-Piece Dinner Set No. 320EEMA21, Price $32.85, as described, and with it the centerpiece and 6 doilies; also 6 silver plate knives and 6 forks absolutely FREE. It is understood that if I am satisfied, I will send you $3.75 monthly until full price of Dinner Set, $32.85, is paid. Title remains with you until paid in full. If not satisfied, after 30 days' free trial, I will ship all goods back and you will refund my $1 and pay transportation charges both ways.

Name..... Occupation.....

R. F. D., Box No. or Street and No.....

Post Office..... State.....

If your shipping point is different from your post office, fill in line below.

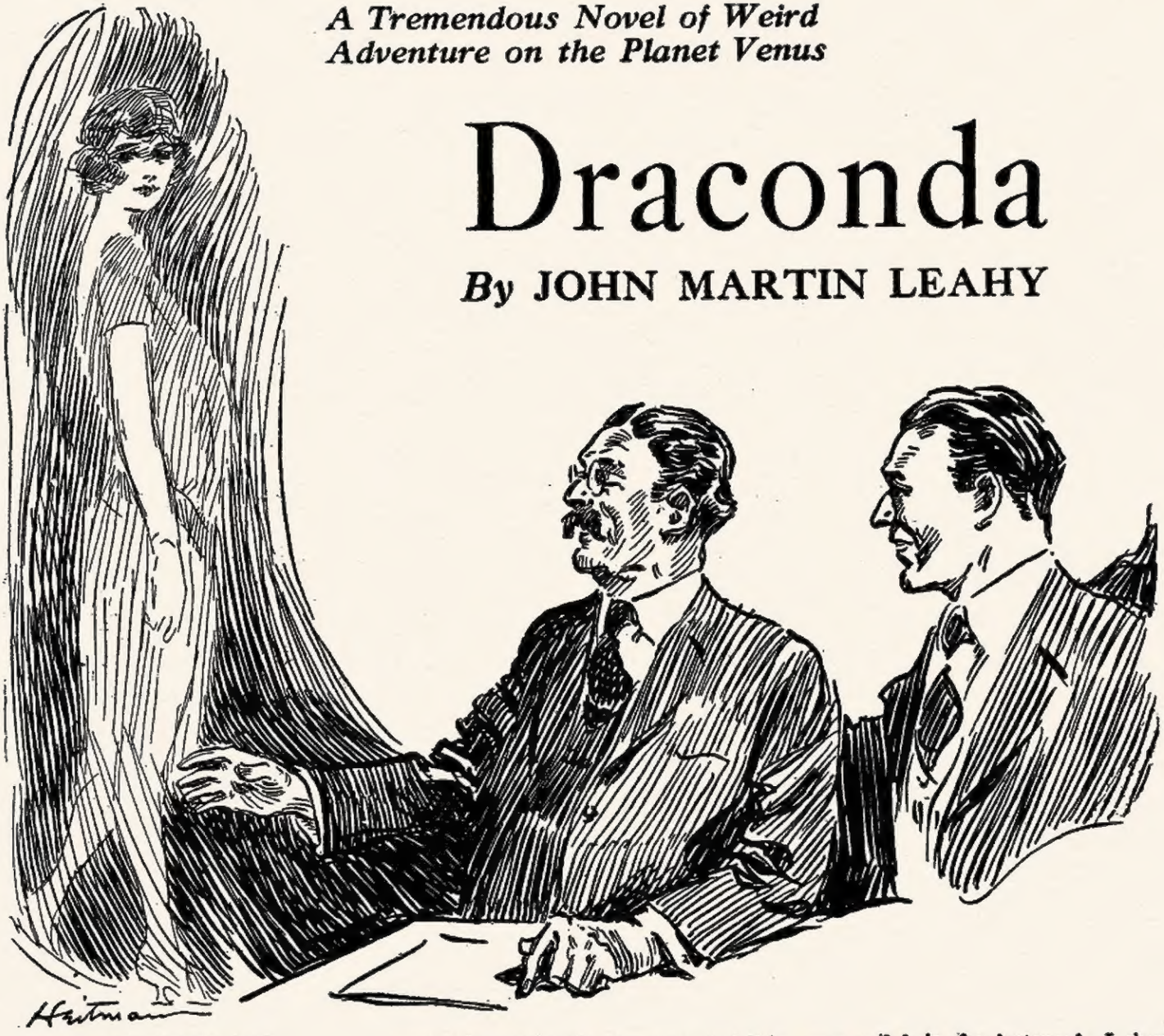
Send shipment to.....

HARTMAN Furniture & Carpet Co.
Dept. 5775 Copyright, 1923, by Hartman's, Chicago **Chicago, Ill.**

A Tremendous Novel of Weird Adventure on the Planet Venus

Draconda

By JOHN MARTIN LEAHY



CHAPTER ONE

HER PICTURE

"We cannot for a moment suppose that our own little planet is the only one throughout the whole universe on which may be found the fruits of civilization, warm firesides, friendships, the desire to penetrate the mysteries of creation."—Simon Newcomb.

THERE was a smile in those cool grey eyes of his.

"But that is sheer nonsense!" I exclaimed.

Henry Quainfan laughed.

"You think so, Rider?" he said.

"I *know* so!"

"You are so often sure! But you are wrong, old *tillicum;* you are wrong!"

"Now, look here," said I, "let's get this thing straight. Though competent authorities (among whom, it seems, you are to be numbered) assure me that it is possible, yet this love-at-first-sight business seems to me—"

"There you go!" he smiled. "That isn't what I meant."

I stared at him.

"Elucidate," said I.

"That there is such a thing as love at first sight is, I believe, indisputable. But that isn't what I made reference to; it was to the vision—the mind photograph, as it were—that the man and the woman in this romance had of each other."

"But everybody has a *dream* mate," said I, who was becoming more mystified than ever.

"Yes," Henry Quainfan nodded; "but that mate is vague—as the novelist says. That mate can not be described at all. Yes, everyone has a dream mate. But this is the point Rider; can everyone tell the color of that dream one's eyes and hair, for instance? I should say not."

"So should I," I told him.

"But to return to this man and woman. They were different; each knew the color of the dream lover's eyes and hair; each had a picture such as you and I have of some person we have known well; it was, indeed, as if they had known each other—had known and loved each other ere they came into this world."

"That is all very well," said I. "It was. But there's something that you forget."

"What?" he asked.

"This: it's only a story."

"Rider," he laughed, "do you know what you are?"

I told him I didn't.

"Pachycephalic."

"I'm glad it's nothing worse. But," said I, "proceed with this erotic—I mean tommyrotic business."

"Very well. These *dream lovers* were different; the woman for long believed that she would one day meet the man whose picture had, in some mysterious way, been stamped upon her mind, stamped so plainly that she could even tell the color of his hair and eyes, and the man believed that he would one day meet his picture woman as a real flesh and blood woman.

"But, as she grew older, the woman slowly, reluctantly (and never quite fully) came to believe that he whose likeness was stamped upon her mind did not exist at all. Mind you, Rider, she never fully believed this. She tried to make herself believe it, but in her heart of hearts there was always a doubt."

"I remember," said I. "But *that* is, I believe, more or less true of every woman —and every man."

"Maybe it is," he nodded. "But as for *this* man, he never doubted; he was true to his dream woman to the end. But she married, they met, and of course the moment they saw each other they loved— and she fainted, and all those things happened."

"But confound it!" I exclaimed.

"Well?" he queried sweetly.

"What's the idea? Surely you don't take this piece of fiction—this moonshine in the mustard-pot—seriously?"

"Seriously? No," said he. "And yet—"

He was looking at me with an odd expression in his eyes. What in the world was he driving at?

"But let me tell you something, Rider," he said. "To no one have I ever told it, and I know that it will not go farther. It is this:

"I am like the two persons in this romance!"

"What?" I cried.

"It is a fact; I am like them," he told me. "Upon my mind is stamped a woman's picture, stamped just as those pictures were stamped upon theirs. Rider, it is as if I had known her, had loved her in some other world."

I stared at him. Where on earth had he got it?

"Do you think," I asked him, "that you will ever meet the lady?"

He shook his head.

"No," he smiled. "Being a Darwinian, how can I believe that the woman whose likeness is stamped upon my mind is a real flesh and blood woman? She is nothing. And yet that picture, Rider! As I have said, it is just as if I had known her, had loved her in a preterrestrial life. I see her now."

He shut his eyes. A brief silence ensued.

"I see her now just as you can see your father and mother, your brothers and sister. Her hair is black, black as the raven's plumage; her eyes are black, too, and her complexion olive; and she is beautiful, inexpressibly beautiful. Never have I seen a woman with beauty such as hers. It alone would prove that this mysterious picture of mine is of no real woman; her beauty transcends that of the daughters of men."

He opened his eyes, looked at me and laughed softly.

"Perhaps you think that I am a fool, Rider; but what I have just told you is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is even so. If I were not *scientific*, I could believe that we lived and loved in some other world and that somewhere, some time we would meet in this—or some other. But it can never be."

"The explanation?" I queried.

"I have none. Whence came her picture, I do not know. Something abnormal stamped it upon my cerebrine cells, that is all; and it is nothing, and it signifies nothing. And now note the paradox, Rider—of a truth I am ashamed to say it; in my mind I am *sure* that this woman of mine is nothing, as sure as I am that certain of our progenitors were apes and that others were slimy things that had crawled up out of the slime of the sea—"

"Then you are not very sure," said I.

He smiled a little.

"Though in my mind I am *sure* of this," he went on, "yet in my heart of hearts at times I *am not sure*. At such times it seems that there come to me faint memories of another and far more beautiful world—come as faint strains of music come when one does not know whether he is awake or asleep. These times are when I hear certain pieces of music and sometimes when I look upon grand scenery.

"But bah! This is foolishness. Coming as it does, from an evolutionist, it is worse than foolishness, and so now there is an end of it."

He turned his look toward the fireplace and sat gazing into the flames, a strange, shadowy expression in his eyes.

For a long time there was silence.

Shadows swayed and flickered in the dim light of the great room as though swung and shook by spirit hands; and the Cartesian devil there on the table stared at me with that glassy, mocking smile.

But that devil was not alone. There was an angel beside him. The angel, though, was not looking at me; her eyes were on Henry Quainfan.

And as I gazed, a strange thing happened:

It was as though I was in that abysmal darkness which lies beyond the farthest star, that awful night which hides the answer to all man's doubts and questionings; and of a sudden I saw a vision there—a vision angelic, ineffable, blinding.

I came to earth with a start.

My fancy had transformed that creature in her glass prison into a vision wondrous beyond all speech.

I smiled at this momentary phantasm of mine.

And yet—it was as though I had caught a glimpse of the Ultimate Mystery.

CHAPTER TWO

"I'VE GOT AN IDEA!"

OF a sudden Henry Quainfan broke the silence.

"By the way, Rider, I didn't tell you of that accident (if I may so call it) which I had the other day in the laboratory, did I?"

I shook my head.

"It was a strange thing," he went on, "the strangest thing in many a long day! You know, I was carrying on some experiments with—"

He ended suddenly and sat staring into the flames.

Now, I knew that he had been experimenting, but what those experiments were, I had not the slightest idea. That he was deep in radio-activity and much interested in certain problems of astronomy (a science in which, strange to say, I had never taken any interest) I well knew; but I had no means of telling in what direction his experiments might tend.

Only a day or two before, he had explained to me that marvelous discovery, "negative gravity," or radiation pressure—mathematically deducted by Clerk Maxwell and proved by the Russian Lebedew and the Americans Nichols and Hull.

It was this, Henry had explained, which drives the tail of a comet away from the sun—a phenomenon which had always been a mystery to astronomers and physicists. Fictionists had airily (and mysteriously) overcome gravitation in order to land the super-inventor hero on the Moon or Mars, and readers had accepted their wild fancies with a smile; and yet here was the sun's terrific gravitational pull overcome before their very eyes.

Whereas gravitation acts on the mass radiation pressure acts on the surface area. If a body—the earth, for instance

—was reduced to a cloud of dust, the surface of the earth-stuff would, it is obvious, be incalculably increased; but the mass of it would not be changed at all. If the particles fell below a certain size, the light-pressure would overcome the pull of gravitation, and that which had been the earth would be blown away into space.

All this I understood perfectly well. But when he launched into a little lecture on molecules, atoms and corpuscles; energy corpuscular, atomic and molecular; to say nothing of cathode, ultra-violet and infra-red rays, alpha, beta and gamma rays, mysterious somethings called ions, negative and positive charges and goodness only knows what else besides—well, it all was very strange and wonderful, but I could not make head or tail of it.

And then he went on to explain that the atom itself—instead of being, as scientists had supposed, the smallest particle of matter—is in reality *a solar system.* In this space so inconceivably tiny, the planets (the corpuscles or electrons) are flying around and around the atomic sun, and with prodigious velocities. This orbital movement of the electrons it is which sets going the ether disturbances which are called radiant energy. Those electrons, said Henry Quainfan, that propagate the ether waves which, on striking matter, produce violent light, make about 800,000,000,000,000 revolutions in a *single second* of time!

And right there I called a halt.

"That will do!" I told him. "That's got Alice in Wonderland done to a frazzle!"

"Of course it has," said he. "The wonders of science—"

"Is that science?" I wanted to know.

Henry Quainfan said that it was.

"But eight hundred trillion times in a second?" I exclaimed. "Nobody ever saw that!"

"Of course nobody ever *saw* it," he smiled. "Nobody ever saw a molecule even."

"Poor Alice!" I murmured.

"It is in these molecules, atoms and corpuscles, however," went on Henry, "that the great discoveries of the future will be made. Somewhere in them lies the key to gravitation, to the mystery of matter itself, space and the stars, and—who knows?—maybe of the mind and death."

"Man will never unlock that door!" said I.

"There are other ways of opening doors," smiled Henry Quainfan: "he may pick the lock. Don't be too sure, Rider. For instance, Comte declared that the constitution of the stars must forever remain unknown, and then came spectrum analysis, which has made visible stars that man has never seen with the eye, and in all probability never will see, and told us of what the stars are made and even the rate of approach or recession. Lord Kelvin too, proved—with mathematics—that man could never fly, and yet today he is doing that very thing.

"So don't be too sure, Rider. The scientist has eyes besides those in his head. Leverrier and Adams couldn't see Neptune, but they told the astronomers where to point the telescope, and there was a new world gleaming in the field."

"But that," put in Morgan St. Cloud, "instead of being, as is often stated, the greatest triumph of mathematical astronomy, was in reality a happy accident. Bode's law breaks down with Neptune; the elements of the planet's orbit which Leverrier and Adams had deduced were away off."

"Certainly," nodded Henry. "It was a half billion miles nearer the sun than it should have been, and its mass was only about half of that predicted—and yet the planet was found within less than a degree of the spot indicated by Leverrier."

But St. Cloud shook his head.

"How many things that scientists trumpet as triumphs," said he, "are in reality happy accidents, how often that which is stated as a fact is nothing but surmise! Why, our old friend Captain Lemuel Gulliver, of romantic memory, scored a greater triumph than did Adams and Leverrier!"*

That by the way, was like St. Cloud.

But to return to that fire-lit library.

Of a sudden Henry Quainfan straightened up in his chair. He made an odd exclamation and stared at me across the table.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"What is it now?" I asked him.

"Why didn't I think of *that* before?"

Certainly I couldn't tell him.

"Blockhead, mole!" he cried.

"I know I am, but this is—"

"*Me!*" he cried, bringing his clenched hand down on the table.

The angel and the devil danced a little, the latter moving so that the curvature of the glass distorted his grin into one strangely grotesque, and more mocking than ever. And still his look was upon me.

"But I see it now!" Henry Quainfan cried. "Rider—"

"Yes?" I suggested.

"I've got an idea!" he exclaimed.

"As though you and ideas were strangers!" I smiled.

He remained silent, plunged in thought, and I fell to wondering what discovery was going to be added now to that amazing list of his, little dreaming how momentous that discovery was to be to him, Morgan St. Cloud and myself—of that awful, unimaginable thing it was to bring to St. Cloud.

CHAPTER THREE

ST. CLOUD

WITH Henry Quainfan lived Morgan St. Cloud, his assistant. There were, by the way, two servants—Buttermore, the cook, and Blimper, who was everything from a sort of *valet de chambre* to helper in the workshop when that was necessary.

And now that I come to Morgan St. Cloud, I find my pen hesitant. How can I, with marks on paper—or in any other way for that matter—paint a portrait of Morgan St. Cloud. I despair of conveying, in any adequate manner, that picture of this dark, courtly, magnetic and mysterious man which haunts my memory in so terrible a manner, and will haunt it to my dying hour.

Mysterious I have called him, and he was. And yet here again I grope in vain for words. I can not give you an idea of that strange quality in his manner, in his dark eyes, in that dark smile of his even, which was always so puzzling—mysterious.

I give it up.

He was about fifty years of age, and strikingly handsome. He drew women's eyes as a flame draws moths. Of his past we knew virtually nothing. On that he had chosen to maintain an almost utter silence, and Henry Quainfan had not pushed inquiries.

That he was a son of Fortune fallen on evil days was obvious; but more than that we did not know.

Of his misfortune I never heard him complain. His philosophy in this seemed to be that it is better to have a bare foot than no foot at all. And this was remarkable in that he was apt to kick up a

*"They have likewise discovered," Gulliver tells us in the Voyage to Laputa, "two lesser stars, or satellites, which revolve about Mars; whereof the innermost is distant from the centre of the primary planet exactly three of his diameters, and the outermost five; the former revolves in the space of ten hours, and the latter in twenty-one and a half."

*This hit of Gulliver's is the most astonishing thing of its kind on record. For the moons of Mars were not discovered until the opposition of 1877 (celebrated, also, by Schiaparelli's discovery of the famous and mysterious canali) when Professor Asaph Hall found them with the great twenty-six-inch telescope of the Washington Observatory.—R. F.

rumpus over nothing. There are men who can be heard a half block if they can not find a cuff-button, but would await the end of the world with equanimity. St. Cloud was something like that—a man of remarkable strength in some ways and in others of lamentable and strange weaknesses.

I have often wondered at that mystery of chance which brought these two, Henry Quainfan and Morgan St. Cloud, together—these two of all men!

And yet *was* it chance? Who can say? Perhaps after all it was Fate. For my part, I can not help thinking that as I look back on the awful drama.

At any rate, Fate must have chuckled, and long too, at the terrible joke. Fate makes no jokes, and laughs at none, that are not terrible.

"If the Almighty had not made her so," as I once heard Draconda say, "she would go mad."

For a time I sat there looking into the flames and thinking. When my eyes turned again to Henry Quainfan it was to find him engrossed in calculations of some sort, computing in that long red note-book which he had with him always.

It was then that the purr of a motor reached my ears. The sound grew swiftly louder. Glancing through one of the windows, I saw the bushes and driveway lighted up, and knew that St. Cloud had come.

In a few minutes he entered. So engrossed, however, was Henry Quainfan in his problem that he remained utterly unaware of St. Cloud's presence in the room.

"Ah, Rider," said St. Cloud, "I thought I'd find you here."

He drew a chair up towards the fire a little and seated himself, his dark look lingering for a few moments on the golden-haired man there in the great rocker, utterly unconscious of St. Cloud, myself—everything save his great problem.

"Dropped in on my way back," went on St. Cloud, "and your man told me you had gone out. Hadn't taken the auto, though, he said, so I knew that you hadn't gone far."

For a time he chatted on, then of a sudden paused and for a little space watched Henry Quainfan.

"In deep," observed St. Cloud.

I nodded.

"Doesn't even know I've arrived," said St. Cloud. "He'll soon be as bad as old Sir Isaac chasing the falling moon. Wonder what it is now?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Heaven knows. Seems to be *some* idea, but what it is about is more than I can even guess at."

"Maybe, now," smiled St. Cloud, "he's figuring out how to separate the positive sphere—funny thing that, Rider, that positive sphere—from the atom. He'll probably do it—with mathematics. You can prove anything with mathematics, Rider; but the validity of your assumptions—ah, there's the rub."

"But what's that?" I asked.

"What?"

"That thing called a positive sphere."

"No, one knows," St. Cloud told me airily, waving a hand. "Henry was coming to it the other day when you interrupted the lecture."

"But eight hundred trillion times in a *second!*" I exclaimed.

"Well, it's so, Rider," St. Cloud declared. "And some go even faster. Now, you know me: you know that, when it comes to theories, assumptions, hypotheses, and so on, that I'm from Missouri—and yet Science has got Romance knocked into a cocked hat."

"But so much of it, if I may presume to judge, must be sheer guess-work!" I objected.

"It is. And worse than that even. But so much of it isn't. Yes, Keats was wrong, all wrong, Rider, poetasters to the contrary notwithstanding."

"Was he?" said I, wondering how.

"He was," nodded St. Cloud. "He declared that Science would kill Fancy, Romance, Imagination—I've forgotten the exact word; but he was wrong, Rider, al wrong, was Keats. Imagination! Good heavens, there is so much imagination that the scientist has a time of it to keep his feet firmly planted on the earth."

"That's precisely what I thought."

"But you don't think it in the right way," he declared.

"If Mr. Scientist would only stay on the earth!" I told him. "But that's just it. He is never satisfied, indeed doesn't seem to be a scientist, until he is mounted on some mathematical or some-other-kind-of Rocinante, galloping down the Milky Way and tilting with cosmic windmills!"

St. Cloud smiled.

"Come back to earth, Rider."

Henry Quainfan, by the way, was still engrossed in his calculations.

"There is something in that, though," St. Cloud admitted. "But all the same, Rider, you are wrong, as wrong as Keats, and—I know you'll pardon me—for the same reason."

"But all this theory!" I said. "However, you mentioned a mysterious something called a positive sphere?"

"That too is theory," said St. Cloud. "It isn't that even, but only an hypothesis. How shall I put it, though? Well, when we went to school, we learned in physics that matter was found in three conditions—solid, liquid and gaseous. Didn't we?"

I said we did.

"Well, it isn't. There are *four.*"

"Four!" I exclaimed.

"Four," nodded St. Cloud. "The fourth is found in the cathode stream—but not only there. The cathode stream doesn't consist of ordinary light, but of particles of matter that are neither solid, liquid nor gaseous."

"Then what on earth are they?"

"Nothing but charges of negative electricity. Those are the electrons or corpuscles. But the problem is simply this: that mysterious sphere which holds the electrons in their orbits is *positive* electricity, and *that* has never been separated from atoms of matter. As we have seen, the negative has."

"But why on earth should anybody want to separate it?" said I.

"Rider," smiled St. Cloud, "you are as bad as Keats! Why, for one thing, to see what would happen: As Henry remarked the other day, it is there that the great discoveries of the future lie. The Crookes tube was only a plaything, and yet it gave humanity the X-ray. Much of this wondering and investigating may strike one as being idle, and yet it may unlock many and—who knows?—terrible secrets."

At this moment Henry Quainfan looked up. His eyes lingered on St. Cloud with a curious, questioning and yet far-away look in them.

"Back, Morgan?" said he, and it was as though his thoughts were far away.

"Back," smiled the dark man. "Back for some time."

"For some time? I'm becoming infernally absent-minded!" exclaimed Henry Quainfan.

"I was telling Rider you'd soon be as bad as old Newton."

St. Cloud turned to me.

"Do you know what he did the other day?"

I didn't.

"He thought that the mustard-pot was the sugar-bowl!"

St. Cloud laughed.

"You should have seen Buttermore! That's not so bad, though—is it?—as that time he went out in the downpour holding a golf club up in the air! Ha, ha, he thought he'd got hold of an umbrella!"

"Laugh away," smiled Henry Quainfan. "But I have an idea that Morgan St. Cloud may do worse than mistake a golf club for an umbrella before we are done with this."

"This?" St. Cloud queried.

Henry Quainfan nodded.

"For I've got an idea—if I may say so, the most wonderful of ideas. We've got some stiff work ahead of us now, Morgan, I fancy. If I hadn't been a blockhead, I'd have seen it before!"

"*Fifth* state of matter—maybe," proffered St. Cloud.

"Perhaps," smiled Henry Quainfan. "And how would you like it in the fourth dimension?"

"Lead on, Macduff!" exclaimed the other, smiling that dark St. Cloudian smile.

CHAPTER FOUR

DONE

"SIMPLY had to break away!" Thus spoke St. Cloud as he took a seat before my fireplace. And indeed his dark features bore the impress of that intense application which had followed (for these many days now) the inception of Quainfan's idea.

Night had just closed in, black and stormy. The wind was growling and roaring and flinging the rain angrily against the windows.

"Great Jupiter Ammon!" St. Cloud exclaimed. "This thing will bowl me over yet. How on earth does he stand it?"

I wondered that myself.

"How is it coming on?" I asked.

His hand made a cabalistic sweep.

"Oh, it's coming on! It's coming!" said St. Cloud. "The only thing is this: where is it going to end?"

He turned his dark look upon me.

"This is a mysterious business, Rider," said he gravely. "Henry has done things over there to make a fellow's hair stand on end!"

"It's like *that?*" I exclaimed.

"Worse!" declared St. Cloud. "It's uncanny—some of it. Creepy! You wouldn't believe me if I told you some of the things I've seen over there."

I made an interrogative exclamation.

"I know you wouldn't, Rider," St. Cloud declared. "You'd think I was losing my wits."

A strange expression settled on his face, and for a time he sat brooding in silence.

Of a sudden he made a wild gesture.

"But it's all Greek to me, Rider! I'm in the dark—Cimmerian darkness. I'm there, I see it done, I even help do things; but I know no more about it, or to what it tends, than I know about the way the ladies on Venus do up their hair."

The touch of levity in his manner vanished, vanished as suddenly as it had come.

"At times, Rider," said he, "I am afraid."

"Afraid?"

"Afraid," he nodded. "And I say it without shame."

"Of what?" I asked him quickly.

"That's it. I don't know of what. But I've seen him do it."

I looked at him inquiringly, but he only gazed at me with a curious expression in his dark eyes.

What was it, I wondered, that he wanted to tell me?

"The mystery in your words," I observed, "would incline one to the belief that there is, after all, something in these wild tales that are going around, and have even got into the press."

"And there is," said St. Cloud. "Of course, the most of it is sheer nonsense, but there is foundation for some of it just the same. For instance, there's that gull story."

I nodded.

"I was going to ask if there was anything in that."

"There is. That's one of the stories there is something in."

"Brooks was telling me about it the day before yesterday," said I. "You know, there was something rather curious in his manner when he mentioned Henry Quainfan; he seems to think that Henry is a danger to the community—indeed, that he has leagued himself with some of the powers of darkness. He was amusedly indignant, was Brooks, about these mysterious happenings. He said something about tax-payers and dangers to the community concomitant to the presence in it of scientific investigators—though I'm afraid Brooks didn't use quite so flattering a term as that."

"And the gulls?" queried St. Cloud.

"It was like this. His wife, Brooks said, had her eyes on them at the very instant that it happened—though I must say that Mrs. Brooks in the role of a gullologist is itself something of a mystery—but the birds had attracted her attention by the peculiar sharpness and rapid sequence of their cries. There were two of them, and they were wheeling swiftly in sharp circles, about two hundred feet up, and—Brooks laid great stress on this—they were directly over the laboratory."

"Only partly correct," remarked St. Cloud. "For I saw *that* episode myself. The gulls were by no means directly over the laboratory, and there were *three* of them, not two. But then what?"

"Of a sudden a greenish flame, dazzling with darting tongues of phosphorescence—that's the way Brooks described it—shot up out of the laboratory. It did not reach the gulls, however, but something as terrible did: where each gull was appeared a sudden puff of flame—"

"*Green*, I suppose," smiled St. Cloud.

"Brooks didn't say as to that. But there came two puffs of flame, and presto! the gulls had vanished—not even a feather remained!"

"Much moonshine," smiled St. Cloud. "As I said, there were three gulls; one of them, though, wasn't touched at all. However, the two others did vanish, but not precisely in the way that Brooks describes. There weren't any puffs of flame. Also, no flame shot up out of the laboratory, though naturally Mrs. Brooks thought that it was a flame. It was a stream of light—a *sword* of fluorescence."

"But the gulls?"

"Oh, they disappeared all right—vanished from before your very eyes!"

"But where to?"

"I don't know, Rider. Where the flame goes, I fancy, when it disappears."

"Since things like that happen, it's no wonder that people are beginning to talk."

"It's no wonder at all, Rider. And I haven't seen all the things that Henry has done. Then there's Nettleton's fantastic yarn, and that falling eagle, and the—"

"I saw that eagle," I said.

"Dead as a door nail when he came down, wasn't he?"

"As Archaeopteryx."

"And marks on him that were a puzzle to the wisest head?"

"I heard at least twenty explanations, and there wasn't a one of them that would do."

"You know," said St. Cloud, "it's no wonder people are beginning to imagine things and to feel uneasy."

"What," I asked, "does Henry think about that? Or does he know?"

"Oh, he knows. Somebody put the matter to him—more strongly it seems than Brooks did to you. Only last night Henry remarked that he would cart the laboratory far into some desert in the West or some mountain fastness—some place where he could at least watch a cathode stream without giving people the nightmare—only—"

"Only what?"

"Only he had something else in mind—a remarkable journey of some kind, he said."

"A journey," said I. "This is becoming interesting."

"Henry's words implied that it would be interesting," said St. Cloud, "mighty interesting. But as to how, where, why, when or what—well, I haven't the slightest idea when it comes to that."

"It seems to me that there is something odd there," I remarked.

"Where, Rider?" St. Cloud wanted to know.

"Why, planning a journey when he is so deep in this business of throwing people into hysterics."

"That's just the way it struck me," said St. Cloud. "And that's why I couldn't help thinking, though the idea seems utterly fantastic, that it—this mysterious journey he so vaguely speaks about—is somehow connected with this."

"This?"

"Precisely," nodded St. Cloud; "this terrible research of his, Rider, for it is that—terrible and more than terrible."

"But good heavens!"

I stared at him.

"Well?" he queried.

"How can this have anything to do with that?"

"I wish I knew, Rider. However, in all likelihood it is only a wild fancy of mine; but it persists. All I know is this; if it's so, it is a journey in which I for one certainly have no desire to accompany him."

"I should say so! Not with *swords* of green light, with something that makes eagles fall down out of the sky and gulls vanish into nothingness—and Heaven only knows what else. Excuse me!"

St. Cloud smiled and sat gazing into the flames.

And then of a sudden out of the storm he came—Henry Quainfan, bareheaded, out of breath, in that long yellow work coat, just as he had quitted the laboratory, his cheeks flushed, his eyes shining in a way that made me feel queer.

Thus he burst in upon us—the water running from him in streams.

To say that I was surprised would be putting it rather mildly; this was not like Henry Quainfan.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, foolishly enough, "what's happened?"

"Happened?"

Henry Quainfan laughed, and that laugh of his, I thought, was tinged with something hysterical; but that might have been only a fancy.

"It's finished, Rider!" he exclaimed. "It's solved; I've done it—done it at last!"

I thrust forth my hand in congratulation, and the force with which he gripped it made me wince. St. Cloud's slender fingers, it was patent, were seized in a grip equally crushing.

"So you've got it?" said I, wondering what on earth it was that he had got.

"Padlocked, as it were," Henry Quainfan smiled. "I've solved the whole business, and everything's worked out, too—decided!"

"Decided?" I echoed. "Everything?"

"Just so," he nodded. "But *that* will be my little secret for the present."

He sank into the chair I had drawn up.

"Heavens," said he, "but I'm tired—damnably tired!"

The golden head sank forward, and he covered his eyes with his hand.

Of a sudden he uttered an exclamation and straightened up.

"Great guns!" he said. "Here I am tearing around like a wild man!"

He stood up.

"Bareheaded!" he exclaimed. "And I've ruined your carpet, Rider. But, now that I have made a fool of myself, I'm going home."

I protested.

"No," said he. "Why, I'll be asleep in two minutes."

"Sleep here," I told him.

But he shook his head.

"Sit down!" I commanded. "I'm going to get something to warm you up."

He smiled his thanks, but said:

"No, Rider; I'm going home."

"But, man, it's coming down in torrents, and—"

"Let her come!" said Henry Quainfan.

And out he went into the rain and storm.

And out with him went Morgan St. Cloud and Rider Farnermain, the former (with arm linked in his) on his left, the latter (ditto) on his right—as if to protect this indomitable one from the puny elements.

CHAPTER FIVE

"QUO VADIS?"

"THAT'S all right, too!" said Morgan St. Cloud. "I can't explain it, though that doesn't mean that I haven't got an explanation. But there the riddle is—and none the less a riddle, I admit, because it's a fact. Whether by accident or design, here we are—in the very center of the Universe!"

I may remark that (besides being in the center of the Universe) we were in Henry Quainfan's library. This, too, was the second night after that in which he burst in upon us out of the storm. However, he had as yet thrown no light whatever on that achievement the consummation of which had sent him to St. Cloud and me, bareheaded and excited, through the wind and the rain—or on that "little secret" of his.

"There you are!" said I to Henry. "Why are we here—in the very center of the starry stage?"

"Why," he smiled, "aren't we in the constellation Sagittarius, or Draco, or Canis Major, or the Big Dipper?"

"I find it hard," I persisted, "to believe that this anomalous position of our sun and his planets is simply a fortuitous one."

"And I find it more than hard, impossible," said Henry Quainfan, "to believe that the Universe was made for man."

"Oh, I don't say *that*," St. Cloud explained. "But I don't believe that man is as the beasts that perish. And as for this central position of our solar system, I can't help fancying that—that it does mean something."

"It is true that our sun seems to be in the center of that vast space ringed round by the Milky Way," said Henry, "but in reality he may not be. For instance, we find Professor Newcomb himself expressing a doubt that these things are as they seem. After instancing Ptolemy's *proof* that the earth was fixed in the center of the Universe, Newcomb says:

" 'May we not be the victims of some fallacy, as he was?'

"But granting that we are in the very center of Creation?" Henry went on. "What then? What does it prove? That the heavens were made for man? Why, how often does that noble creature even look at them? Does it prove that we must look at a human being—a thing a brother to the tiger and the ape, and like as not more beastly than either—if we would behold the noblest work of the Almighty God?"

"I don't know," answered Morgan St. Cloud. "I wouldn't go so far as that. All I say is this: that the greatest mystery which ever confronts a human being is—humanity."

"But Rider goes that far."

"I do," I told him. "I believe, with Dr. Wallace, that this position of our earth in the center of the Universe (along with a thousand other things) goes to prove just that."

"But it doesn't prove anything at all," Henry Quainfan said, "Dr. Wallace and Rider Farnermain to the contrary notwithstanding. For our sun wasn't always here. He too is on his way. Every morning of our lives finds him over a million miles farther on that journey of his towards the glorious star in the northern heavens known to men as Alpha Lyrae."

"That our sun is making a journey through space, and a stupendous one, no one can doubt," said St. Cloud. "But one can doubt that the apex of the sun's way is Alpha Lyrae—indeed, that there is any apex or anti-apex at all. That's

all assumption. That our sun is traveling in a straight line may be a fact, but as a matter of fact it's only an assumption. Maybe, for all we know, his journey is a circle, or an ellipse, or a parabola—"

"Or a corkscrew," smiled Henry Quainfan.

"Or a fishhook," said St. Cloud.

"Pigs," Henry Quainfan told him, "fly through the air with their tails forward."

"If my aunt," said St. Cloud, "had been a man, she'd be my uncle."

"You simps," I put in, "remind me of Simpkins."

"Who was who?" Henry asked.

"The farmer who had half a sectionful of noise but a thimbleful of wool."

"That," St. Cloud told him, "was when Simpkins sheared his pig."

Henry Quainfan laughed.

"And the same day he put a hat on a hen. But we agree famously; it's something."

"But that it's from Canopus to Vega—nothing but assumption!" St. Cloud persisted.

"Have it your way!" Henry Quainfan laughed. "When it comes to the teachings of science, Morgan St. Cloud is sometimes as hopeless as Rider Farnermain on man's place in the Universe. As to the voyage that our sun with his planets is making through space, I admit that we are not absolutely sure that the course is a straight one. But the evidence we have teaches us that it is so. But straight or crooked, ellipse, parabola, corkscrew or fishhook—there is the terrible mystery of it all! Where was the sun when the first life stirred and moved on this planet of ours; to what part of the Universe will he have flown when that last miserable human awaits the end of humanity and all of humanity's hopes and dreams?"

Said I:

"And in this epic of the worlds—terrible, I admit, and in the light of science more terrible even than it ever was in the imaginations of the ancients—but amidst all this play and interplay of forces stupendous and cosmic, amidst all this mysterious power and starry beauty, yet man, man with his godlike intellect, which is even unlocking the mysteries of star and nebula—yet man, you say, dies as the beasts that perish, is no more to the Almighty Creator than is the ape or the wolf?"

"Of course he is not," said Henry Quainfan. "Or the sparrow that falls—or the kangaroo that hops."

"Then why are we here? Why do we love and suffer and dream and die, if eternal blackness is the end of it all? What is it all about?"

"That," returned Henry Quainfan, "is the very thing I want you anthropocentricists to tell me. But I know you won't, and for a good reason; you can't. You can talk about dreams, and you ask what it's all about if man hasn't got a soul that lives when he dies; but that is not an answer to anything.

"And as for that mysterious power and starry beauty you make so much of, how often does your noble man—this being with the godlike intellect—how often does he even think of that? He (and he's male and female) is thinking of other things—as your wolf or ape thinks of other things; of bottles asparkle with booze, for instance, of the belly and the loins."

I winced (mentally) as that blow struck. That is the way with your materialist; he rains upon you stones fished out of the muck of the physical puddle, while you (for of course the flower's perfume and beauty are lost on him) can only fling at him the rose petals of faith and the spirit.

"We could talk about man's place in the Universe for the rest of our lives!" I told him. "But we shall never know the answer till we die."

"But I don't want to wait till I die; I think I can get *an* answer now," said Henry Quainfan. "At any rate, I purpose to try. And that brings me to the little journey I hinted about to you, Morgan."

"Lord?" exclaimed St. Cloud. "Must be some journey if it is going to solve the mystery of life and death!"

"Oh, not *that!*" Henry Quainfan said. "But I believe that it will shed a dazzling light on man's place in Creation. If Rider will come along, I think he will find man—man, that noble creature with the godlike intellect—I think, Rider, that you will find him tumbled into the dust from his throne."

"Has it got anything to do with this gull and eagle business?" I asked him.

Henry Quainfan laughed.

"That was nothing," he said. "There will be danger of course, maybe death—and perhaps worse than death even. But there will be nothing to fear from that."

"*Quo vadis?*" asked St. Cloud.

"Venus!" said Henry Quainfan.

With a sudden movement Morgan St. Cloud straightened up in his chair.

"What's that?"

"Venus," Henry Quainfan told him.

"You mean Venus the planet?"

"Foolish question number one!" smiled Henry Quainfan.

"What other Venus is there?"

Morgan St. Cloud laughed.

"What's the idea, Henry?" he wanted to know.

"But I'm speaking in all seriousness," Henry told him. "I said Venus, and I didn't mean Timbuctoo—Venus the planet, probably the loveliest of all the worlds that go round our sun. Yes, even more wonderful, perhaps, than our own wonderful world—which Rider thinks is the king-pin of Creation."

"Do you mean to tell me," I asked him, "that you have conquered gravitation?"

"Just that. I've discovered a negative gravity. And not only that: I can turn it off and on, so to speak—the same as you do the water in your tap."

I stared at him.

"It will have to soak in, I suppose," said I. "For this is coming big."

"You know, I marvel now," said Morgan St. Cloud, "that I didn't know it. Once I was blind, but now I can see. It's always like that. I thought of this, too, but of course it was only to dismiss it from my mind as one of the wildest of fancies—something like that fourth dimension stuff. Gravitation conquered, interplanetary travel—great Jupiter Jerusalem, how could I imagine that that was possible?"

"Physicists—that is, some of them—have known that it was possible," Henry Quainfan said, "possible if man could only find out *how*. To the layman, however, it has always been a wild dream—wilder even than his wildest fiction, which after all is pretty tame stuff. The talking-machine, the X-ray, the submarine and the airplane—all those things were dreams until men found out how. They were never *impossible.*"

He turned to me, and there was a smile in those gray eyes of his.

"So don't be too sure. Rider, don't be too sure that the great mystery will never be solved—the mystery, that is, of life and death."

"But—"

"Well?" he queried.

"How on earth can this mad journey shed any light on those things—on the mystery of life and death and our place in God's Creation?"

"What we find at the end of it," returned Henry Quainfan, "will answer that."

CHAPTER SIX

THE GREAT ENIGMA AND MYSTERY

"BUT—" began St. Cloud.

Henry looked at him inquiringly.

"But again, Morgan," he suggested.

"You talk as though the whole thing were settled."

"And it is. Everything's worked out. It's only a matter of detail now. That's what I meant when I said everything was decided."

That dubious expression on St. Cloud's features did not lift.

"But won't there have to be experiments, trial trips, or something?"

"Experiments? Great guns, haven't I been doing that? Of course, problems will come up, but, unless I'm greatly mistaken, by no means hard ones. Those are all solved. I can send a piece of Quainfanity — which in common parlance would be negative gravity—I can send a piece of Quainfanity out into space. I've done it of course—more than once. The thing now is to go out with it. I tell you, Morgan, I've got this thing down to a T."

"I'm glad of that," returned St. Cloud, "because it is going to take you a long way up. But what's it to be like —this Quainfanomobile thing you are going to make the journey in?

"Imagine a lemon—"

"That," put in St. Cloud, "is just what I have been imagining."

"A big steel lemon with windows in it. I've even got it named, too; it's the *Hornet*. And inside I see Morgan St. Cloud, Rider Farnermain and yours truly."

"Oh, no you don't!" I told him, "You don't see Rider Farnermain inside that steel lemon!"

"Nor me;" St. Cloud told him. "That's what I meant when I spoke of the whole business being settled."

"But I think I do see you," Henry smiled, "Rider and Morgan. However, if you won't come along, then I'll go it alone. You will have plenty of time to make up your minds. None of us has near kith or kin, so that if disaster overtakes us, there will be no one to deluge the earth with tears, or to say thank God as he (or she) hastens to put on mourning. And one thing: not a word of this must get out. You will remember that neither Blimper nor Buttermore is in the house. I saw to that, and I instance it so that each of you will be very careful."

"So it's Cytherea?" said Morgan St. Cloud.

"Aphrodite," nodded Henry Quainfan.

"From something I read somewhere," I remarked, "I got the idea that this planet is in a fix that is simply awful. Why did you choose her?"

"Because she is after all probably the most wonderful planet in our solar system. As for the superior planets, it is extremely probable that not one of them is habitable save Mars; the others, it seems, are nothing but gas. And as to Mars, its rarefied air would cause a Terrestrial much inconvenience, even if it would not render his sojourn there utterly impossible. So there remain only Venus and Mars; Mercury is like the moon, dead. Of course Venus resembles the earth much more than does Mars; indeed, Venus is Terra's twin sister."

"Sometimes, though," St. Cloud observed, "twin sisters don't resemble each other very closely."

"Tell me something about Venus," I asked Henry. "You know that my astronomical attainments are not great."

"In the first place, she is well named; she is to us the most beautiful of the planets, the loveliest and the most mysterious—and the only one, by the way, mentioned by Homer. Though, with the exception of the moon and the asteroid Eros (or some comet) she of all the heavenly bodies comes the nearest to us, yet is Venus one of the great enigmas and mysteries of astronomy."

"One would think," said I, "since she approaches us the most nearly, that she would be known the best."

"But you forget, Rider," Henry smiled, "that she is Venus! She has a hundred moods and a thousand veils, and a time for each of them all. Galileo, with his little spy-glass, discovered that 'The Mother of Loves imitates the shapes of Cynthia;'* but since his day men, albeit armed with the most powerful telescopes, have learned but little more—that is, about Venus herself; her orbit of course (the most nearly circular in the solar system) is known, and her volume and mass, with a high degree of certainty. But Venus herself still refuses to unveil—or, rather, wears one guise for one man and a different for the next.

"For instance, to See she is in all the loveliness of youth, a veritable twin sister to the earth; while to Lowell she is wrinkled and lined, stamped with the marks of an age terrible beyond all words.

"Her distance from the sun is sixty-seven millions of miles, her diameter is about seven thousand eight hundred, and her sidereal revolution is made in two hundred and twenty-five days—two hundred and twenty-four days and seventeen hours, very nearly."

"Then," said I, "if we were to set foot on Venus—good heavens, I'd be *forty* years old!"

"That's what you would."

"That settles it," I told him. "I stay here on the earth. I'm not looking for the Fountain of Age. Now, if it was the Fountain of Youth—"

"You'll find that on Jupiter," put in St. Cloud; "you'd be about two years old on Jupiter."

"Better still; take Neptune, Rider," smiled Henry Quainfan, "you'd be not quite two *months* old there!"

"Oh, this science!" I exclaimed. "No wonder Newton—it was Newton, wasn't it?—when he had made a hole for the big chickens, decided it would be a shame to keep the little chickens from following after, and so made a little hole, too, for them! I can understand it."

"Now," Henry went on, "Venus is certainly Terra's twin sister if she have a succession of day and night on her surface such as we know here, and if the inclination of her axis is at all like that of the earth's. Unfortunately, however, what with the glare of the planet's atmosphere, nothing is certainly known on these points."

"It seems," I observed, "that this planet is indeed something of a mystery."

"Didn't I tell you that she is well named? Those men of ancient times, Rider, were wiser than the men of today—who are forever blowing their own trumpets and pounding their own drums —will give them credit for."

"Yes," nodded St. Cloud. "And after all the loudest drum has nothing in it but wind. But you said a true word there. For instance, there's that figure of Nisroch which Layard found in the ruins of Nineveh."

Henry nodded.

"Who," I asked, "was this fellow Nisroch?"

"Saturn," St. Cloud told me. "And —in this figure, that is—he had a ring around him."

"Suppose it had been a pump-handle or a handsaw."

"Handsaws," St. Cloud said, "are good things, but not to shave with."

"You'll remember, Rider," said Henry Quainfan, "that the planet Saturn is ringed. How did those old boys know that?"

"But—do you think they really did know it?"

"I wish I knew! There's the ring, though."

"But—"

"Well?" he queried.

"They would have had to have telescopes to know that."

*Cynthiae figures aemulatur Mater Amorum.

"Precisely. And that's just what Proctor thought this discovery of Layard's indicated."*

"How old, it seems, the world is, and man is!"

"And how young! But to return to Aphrodite.

"As for her axial period, the elder Cassini was the first to make a determination, and he set it down as twenty-three hours and fifteen minutes. Bianchini, in 1726, gave it as twenty-four *days* and eight hours; but J. Cassini pointed out that there could be deduced, also, from the observations of Bianchini an axial period of twenty-three hours and twenty minutes. That given by Schroeter, in 1789, was twenty-three hours, twenty-one minutes and nineteen seconds, which he afterwards corrected and made twenty-three hours, twenty minutes and 7.977 seconds. From over ten thousand observations, De Vico, of Rome, deduced a diurnal rotation of twenty-three hours, twenty-one minutes and 21.956 seconds—a conclusive deduction, one would think.

"However, in 1890, Schiaparelli made the startling announcement that Venus rotates very slowly, that her axial rotation is probably isochronous wih her orbital revolution; in other words, that she always keeps one face turned toward the sun, just as the moon does toward the earth.

"Lowell's observations led him to the same conclusion. Her sky—which others declare is densely cloud-laden—he finds invariably clear (the great brilliancy of her atmosphere, indeed, he explains by this very clearness) and he also finds certain faint spoke-like markings, which do not move across the planet's disk, as they would do did Venus rotate like the earth.

"Then Belopolsky sought to solve the problem with the spectroscope; the displacement of the lines showed a rotation period of about twenty-three hours. This would seem to conclude the question; but Lowell followed suit; and the Flagstaff spectrograms, taken by Slipher, gave no evidence whatever of a rapid rotation.

" 'They yielded, indeed,' Lowell tells us, 'testimony to a negative rotation of three months, which, interpreted, means that so slow a spin as this was beyond their power to precise.'

"On the other hand, Professor See—who claims that Venus is an inhabited world—is convinced that the rapid rotation is the true one; indeed, he declares that 'a period of about twenty-four hours is shown to be the only one possible.'

"So there you are. Judge for yourself."

"I find a lot of leaves," I told him, "but very few grapes. However, what do you believe?"

"That the evidence is preponderantly in favor of the short period of rotation."

"Let us hope 'tis the true one," said I. "Heaven pity the poor planet if one side is an oven and the other an ice-box."

"In point of fact," Henry went on, "I am convinced that the planet's axial spin is a rapid one. For, as Arrhenius has pointed out, if one side of the planet was in eternal darkness she would not have any atmosphere to speak of; the temperature on that night side would be near minus two hundred and seventy-three degrees Centigrade—the absolute zero—and all the atmospheric gases would be there, and frozen liquid or solid.*

"But we find no such thing on Venus; her atmosphere, as both visual and spectroscopic observations show, is a dense one, probably even denser than our own, and contains a considerable amount of water-vapor.

"So much, though, for her diurnal spin. When it comes to her axis, there is a like uncertainty. Some observers believe that it is nearly perpendicular to the plane of her orbit. If this is so, then she has no appreciable succession of seasons, but the seasons (if we may so call them) lie in zones and are perennial, and day and night, everywhere on the planet, are of equal length.

"Others, however, assure us that the inclination is in reality about the same as that of Terra's axis; while still others picture a world as terrible, almost, as that Venus of Schiaparelli and Lowell.

"According to these observers in question, her axis is far from the perpendicular, is inclined to the plane of her orbit at an angle of probably no more than fifteen degrees. That of the earth's is sixty-six and one-half degrees. Venus' equator, therefore, is, roughly, where the earth's *axis* is and her axis is in about the same place as Terra's equator. If this is so, the torrid and temperate zones overlap each other, and the boreal and austral regions have, at one solstice, a frigid temperature and a torrid heat at the other, which would make things mighty uncomfortable for Terrestrials.

"However, for my part, I believe that we have nothing to fear from this remarkable inclination—that in this respect, as in so many others, Venus closely resembles the earth.

"The difference between the gravities of the respective orbs is not noteworthy.

"The planet has no moon.

"And now what more? Venus must be inhabited. Her physical habitudes must closely resemble those of this planet. Of course, because of her greater proximity to the sun, the amount of light and heat that is poured upon Venus greatly exceeds that which this planet of our receives; but the heavy cloud-envelope is a good protection, reflecting much of it and rendering the surface of the planet cool and equable.

"But even if there is no cloud-envelope, even if the Venusian skies are as clear as our skies, one could live in the temperate, subarctic and arctic zones, though no Terrestrial could endure the heat poured down upon her equatorial regions.

"Then there are the mountain and the plateau heights; one could find any kind of climate.

"So men could surely live on her surface, cloud-envelope or no cloud-envelope—that is, so far as the rigors of climate are concerned. Whether the Cythereans, or Venusians—or whatever we choose to call her inhabitants—would permit one to live in comfort remains to be seen; and I am going to see.

"It is obvious that it would be idle to speculate on the manner of inhabitants that people her solitudes or swarming cities. Perhaps there are creatures of high intelligence there, but there may be nothing of the kind. Who can say? But one thing is certain."

"And that is—" I suggested.

"There are no human beings!"

"I knew it was that."

"If we believed that each kind of living things was created by a direct fiat of the Creator—if we believed this, then the belief that Venus may be inhabited by human beings would be tenable; but, since evolution is an incontestable fact, this belief is an utter absurdity: evolution can not progress along parallel, identical lines on two planets."

"I can see as far into a millstone as another man," I told him.

"That was true once, Rider, but not now: the other fellow may have an X-ray."

Said St. Cloud:

" 'In that star of the west, by whose shadowy splendor,
At twilight so often we've roamed thro' the dew,
There are maidens, perhaps, who have bosoms as tender,
And look, in their twilights, as lovely as you.' "

Was there once a now forgotten age when men were as learned as we are today, and did a little of this knowledge descend to their degenerate successors in the form of uncomprehended traditions?—Garrett P. Serviss.

Except the helium and the hydrogen.—H. Q.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE HORNET

"BY the way," said I, "where is Venus now?"

"Approaching superior conjunction," returned Henry; "she is lost in the sun's rays."

"From there whither?" I asked.

"Over east of the sun, and evening star."

'Going or coming then?"

"Coming, until inferior conjunction—that's when she is between the earth and the sun—when she passes back to the west of him and is morning star once more."

"Then," said I, "I suppose your plan of campaign will be something like this: you will meet the lady when she is in this inferior conjunction, as you call it—which, if I understand it aright, is when she is nearest the earth."

"Precisely," he nodded.

"Otherwise, you would be going out of your way to meet her, or would be chasing her around."

"Just so. And she goes twenty-two miles a second."

"Whew! At that rate, it shouldn't take her long to come round to this point where you are to meet her."

"About nine months and a half: she has to catch up with the earth, you know."

"Nine months and a half at twenty-two miles a second! Great Jupiter Ammon! Well, anyway, that will give you time enough for the *Hornet,* won't it?"

"And to spare," nodded Henry, "or I'm a billy-goat."

As it turned out, Henry was no billy-goat; before the Queen of Beauty had reached what astronomers call her greatest elongation (a queer jargon these stargazers have) the *Hornet* was finished.

What was the *Hornet* like? Imagine a lemon—a big steel lemon, twenty feet long and ten feet through the middle. That is just what the Hornet was like in shape, save that the ends had been snipped off, as it were. And in each end was a thick but perfectly transparent glass, looking like a ship's port. Indeed, one of these gleaming disks was imbedded in a heavy steel frame which swung inward on hinges—for all the world like a port. This, of course, was to permit our ingress and egress; when the door was closed, the *Hornet* was as air-tight as a pop-bottle.

It must not be supposed, however, that these were the only windows; there were six of them all told in this marvelous thing that was to be our world—so tiny a world, dashing on and on through the deeps of space, on toward utter destruction.

As I have said, Venus had not yet reached her greatest elongation, which means that there remained about two months before the start: it was Henry's belief that the *Hornet* would travel across that terrible abyss with at least the speed of the earth in her orbit; in other words, fifteen days or so after quitting our world, if all went well we should be on the Planet of Love.

"But maybe we'll run into a meteor," said St. Cloud—who, by the way, had said this thing a hundred times if he had said it once.

"Of course," nodded Henry Quainfan. "But maybe we sha'n't. Space, I believe, is rather spacious, Morgan."

"And meteors, I believe, are rather multitudinous."

"Oh, well," Henry said, "Fortune can take from us nothing but what she gave."

"But Miss Fortune can."

"He that sitteth on the ground can't tumble, Morgan."

"As well sit still as rise up and fall."

"Hope," Henry told him, "is as cheap as despair."

"He may hope for the best that's prepared for the worst."

"He that always fears danger," said Henry, "always feels it."

"And he that passes a judgment as he runs overtakes repentance."

"Experience, we all know, keeps a dear school—"

"And fools like us," said St. Cloud, "will learn in no other."

"He that fears not the future may enjoy the present."

"In Golgotha," said Morgan St. Cloud, "are skulls of all sizes."

"And in Hell," Henry told him, "they now have fans."

St. Cloud smiled his dark smile and turned to me.

"Why didn't you come to my help, Rider?"

"Silence," I explained, "is wisdom when speaking is folly."

"Right," said he. "But sometimes 'tis wisdom to seem a fool."

Though the *Hornet* was done, we were by no means, in the days that followed, twiddling our thumbs; on the contrary, I positively believe that we were the busiest mortals in the whole state.

Two trial ascents were made, though not to a great height. The first Henry Quainfan insisted on making alone.

"Not that I doubt my absolute control of the *Hornet,*" said he; "experiments have made me confident of that. Just caution, you know."

In neither instance was the height attained more than twenty miles. Though this was a record-smasher, in view of what followed it was in reality nothing.

Then we had to decide upon and procure (not so easy an office as may be fancied) those things necessary for our wild undertaking—firearms, medicines, food, and so on.

Venus reached her greatest elongation—a dazzling half moon of silver in Henry's little telescope, a four-inch refractor. She now began rapidly to approach the sun and swing into the crescent.

Then at last came *the* day.

CHAPTER EIGHT

INTO THE DEPTHS

IN the *Hornet* was a goodly supply of solidified air. There was also (among other things) a water apparatus, an apparatus to remove carbonic anhydrid from the atmosphere, and one to supply oxygen.

"We have nothing," Henry Quainfan made asservation, "to fear for our respiratory or alimentary machinery."

Also, there was an apparatus with which he hoped to send electromagnetic waves from Venus to the earth; but this, alas, was never attempted.

He had given a code to an ill-starred inventor named Homer L. Wood—a code that, if communication across that awful gap proved possible, none of the uninitiated would be apt to decipher. He had not explained things to Wood, had merely given him the code and the information that some time he might receive something which would bring him fame and fortune.

Poor Wood! I fear he shall have to wait many a long day for that unknown something.

What would be the use of dwelling on those last hours on the planet of our birth? I could not describe them. If I tried to put down on paper the sensations that came thronging into my breast and the thoughts which came thronging into my mind, I should only fail miserably.

So I shall hasten on.

That last night passed slowly. I slept but little, and, when I did sleep, it was only to dream the most terrible dreams.

And the day passed slowly. We did not talk much and moved about restlessly.

At one time, indeed, I felt like backing out, but the feeling soon passed away.

"I wonder," Henry smiled, "what Blimper and Buttermore will think. I

would like to hear some of the explanations!"

"There will be some wild stories now," I said.

"But none I imagine, Rider, so wild as the truth itself."

"I don't think there will," said St. Cloud.

And now, as I look back, I don't think that there was.

Once or twice I heard Henry Quainfan singing, in a low voice. I remember the following:

"I love a maid, a mystic maid,
Whose form no eyes but mine can see;
She comes in light, she comes in shade,
And beautiful in both is she."

Then there were those two lines which have become imbedded in my memory, though at the time I thought nothing of them. Here they are:

"When thou wert given we were as one,
Who now are two and widely sundered."

At last night came down on the world, black and threatening. Thus the weather favored us, for with a clear sky, somebody might see the *Hornet* go heavenward; and that was just what Henry Quainfan did not want anybody to do.

On the whole world not a single soul knew that three men were going to launch out into the ether deeps this night.

About an hour after the coming of darkness, a strong wind came up, and a little later a heavy rain began to descend, bolting out, over there in the west, the city's light-spangled hills.

Well, we three took our last look at the world and entered the *Hornet*.

The little chamber was lighted by an electric bulb. Blinds were drawn over the windows.

My heart was going *Thumpety-thump*, my face I knew was pale, and there was a sickening sensation in, to use a phrase of Henry's, my "scrobiculus cordis."

With a face upon which there was not the slightest tinge of pallor and with hands that were perfectly steady, Henry closed the door and made it fast.

For a time he moved about—busy and yet in reality doing nothing.

"All ready now!" he said.

There succeeded a short silence. St. Cloud and I stood expectant, moveless.

Henry, however, seemed to have plunged into thought.

I breathed a silent prayer to the dread Being who created the innumerable hosts of stars and the awful wastes of space, and notes when sparrows fall.

Of a sudden Henry Quainfan roused himself.

"Now we go!" he said.

The next moment there was a slight jerk. We were off. Our little world was rushing away from the earth with the speed of a bullet. And down below people would pass the night as was their wont, would get up in the morning and proceed with their little earthly affairs as usual, would see, day after day, the sun rise, pursue his way through the heavens and sink, as they always had—while we three should never see the great luminary in the terrestrial heavens again, had left the earth forever and were rushing up and out into the icy and bottomless deeps of space.

CHAPTER NINE

THE ABYSS

IT would be difficult to say why, but in my mind this has always seemed the point where the astounding, and in some ways awful, drama of Draconda really began.

And this is perhaps remarkable in that what was to follow—I mean that drop sunward for the matter of something like thirty millions of miles—had (and has) the seeming of some wondrous and terrible dream.

Of a sudden my mind became a panic—a mad riot. What an utter fool, what a colossal ass I had been to come on this mad journey! If I could only get out! But it was too late; I couldn't do that now. The earth must already, I knew, be at a terrific distance below us, and the *Hornet*—this tiny thing that was now our world—was rushing up and out with appalling speed. Get out, indeed! We were committed, and committed with a vengeance.

St. Cloud was, I believe, as scared as myself; but Henry Quainfan appeared to be utterly unaffected. Those nerves of his were nerves of steel.

At length he smiled at us and said:

"Well, we're on our way!"

A remark that struck me as positively idiotic.

St. Cloud made an exclamation.

I said:

"How far are we up?"

Henry Quainfan turned his eyes to a thing that looked something like an auto speedometer.

"Just about ten miles now," he said airily.

"I didn't think it was more than half that," I told him. "We are certainly going some."

"Not yet, Rider," he smiled. "It's the atmosphere, you know. As soon as we get out of it, we'll pick up speed."

"If it wasn't for that hissing or whistling sound," said Morgan St. Cloud, "I could swear that the *Hornet* was at rest. There is no swaying, nothing to show that we are moving."

"That's so," I said. "Why, Henry, these darkened windows?"

Henry Quainfan nodded.

"And it will take but one look to destroy that illusion of rest.

"You see," he added, his finger poised over a button, "I didn't want any of those gullologists to see us go up. Also, it probably was good for our nerves. And in all likelihood, we'll need all the nerves we've got before very long. This thing is going to be—well, decidedly *unearthly*."

"It's our minds we've got to watch," put in Morgan.

"Precisely."

Henry's finger pressed down, and the blind shot away from the window (ingeniously protected) in the floor of the *Hornet*. Then he rapidly released all the other blinds and turned off the light.

The sky was of the intensest black, and the stars shone as they never do in the depths of that aerial ocean in which men have their being.

I dropped on my knees and peered earthward. The sight was stupendous, appalling even, and yet after all I beheld but a vast expanse of world involved in the uncertainty and mystery of night.

"It's still *hollow*," I said.

"Of course," returned Henry. "But after a time it will be a sphere."

I referred, of course, to the seeming concavity of the earth — that most strange phenomenon, and well known to aeronauts.

It was some minutes afterwards—how many I don't know—that it came. I had just straightened up and was looking out one of the windows. St. Cloud was beside me looking too. He gave a sharp exclamation. At that instant across that star-powdered blackness shot a sword of fire, and as the eye leaped to follow, that plunging point of it was shattered into a thousand incandescent fragments.

"What now?" came Henry's voice.

"A meteor," returned St. Cloud. "And it was infernally close. If that thing had hit the *Hornet!* Bullets are snails compared with those boys."

"Yes," said Henry Quainfan; "it was probably going something like twenty or thirty miles a second—that is, when it came plunging into the atmosphere. Those waifs of space do constitute a danger, a danger by no means insignifi-

cant—the only real danger, though, I believe, that confronts us in this our drop sunward."

"Some consolation, that," St. Cloud told him.

"Oh, well," he added, "a good hope is better than a bad possession."

"And death," Henry said, "has nothing terrible in it save what life has made so."

"I am not so sure of that," said Morgan St. Cloud.

"You're a cheerful couple!" I interposed. "Is Venus the Planet of Death?"

"She may be that, Rider," muttered St. Cloud, "and something even worse. At any rate, she is the Planet of Love: isn't that bad enough?"

"Maybe," Henry Quainfan said. "For what is Love but Death's Dawn?"

"For Goodness' sake," I exclaimed, "give over this cabalistic stuff and talk sense!"

"I thought we were doing that, Rider," Henry laughed. "We might as well talk the sheerest nonsense, though, as stand chewing our thoughts. Confound it, I wish we were out of this!"

"What's that?" I asked him.

He laughed.

"I don't mean out of the *Hornet*, Rider. I wouldn't wish that for the world and all the kingdoms of the world. Had that feeling been possible, I would have remained there below. What I mean is this: out of the atmosphere."

"Of course," I said.

"Don't get impatient," growled Morgan St. Cloud. "You'll probably wish yourself back in it before we are done."

"Icarus, eh?" queried Henry Quainfan.

"Great guns, *no!*" St. Cloud replied.

"The air," I remarked, somewhat irrelevantly, "must be deucedly rarefied at this height."

"It is," Henry returned. "But it goes up a long way, how far nobody knows: the highest meteors are about eighty miles up.

"The atmosphere at that altitude, and upward, must be nothing but hydrogen. Dr. Wegener, however, has postulated a substance above the hydrogen even. He assumes that the green line in the spectrum of the auroral arches is due to this unknown gas of remarkable tenuity, to which he has given the name geocoronium.

"You will remember, Rider," he added, "that helium was seen in the sun long before it was discovered, by Ramsay, on the earth."

"I remember," I said. "And I remember, too, that the great Herschel believed in the *sun's habitability*."

"Rider," Henry laughed, "do you think you will ever get over it?"

"And above this geocoronium, I suppose," put in St. Cloud, "lies that other gas of remarkable tenuity (and ubiquity) called perhapsium."

"And above your perhapsium," said Henry, "you'll probably find it-may-be-there-ium."

"Science in a nutshell!" I observed. "Coronium itself is hypothetical stuff, and yet here we find another postulated substance named after it. I am beginning to believe that Keats *was* wrong."

"Of course he was, Rider," said St. Cloud. "All you've got to do is look out one of these windows to see that."

"You score," I told him.

And he did indeed.

In stranger places we were to find ourselves, and things unimaginable we were to see and hear; but never before had men (save in wild fancy) beheld such a thing as this.

We were, of course, now far above the altitude reached by the highest clouds, the cirrus, though the so-called "luminous night clouds" were observed in some instances at a height of fifty miles above the earth; but these anomalous phenomena were not clouds in the usual meaning of that term.

Also, we were in that mysterious region called the stratosphere, the discovery of which (by Teisserenc de Bort and Assman) demolished the belief entertained by scientists that there was a steady decrease in temperature with increase of altitude, until at last the absolute zero of space itself was reached—for in the stratosphere the temperature is constant. Furthermore, there is a decrease in the rotational velocity of the stratospheric lamellae as one goes upward, with the result that the outermost parts of the earth's atmosphere do not rotate at all!

Steadily upward the *Hornet* sped, past that point reached by the highest "night clouds," past that region in which the highest meteors are seen, up till the moon (in her third quarter) came swimming into view from behind the bulge of the earth, hurling through the windows a light that was blinding in its white intensity.

And up and up and out!

Up till the sunlight smote through the windows, burning and blinding—and blinding—and soon of a strange bluish color. We had issued from the earth's shadow; we were now in endless day. And yet, paradoxical though it be, those ether deeps are pitch black.

"We'll give her the gas!" said Henry Quainfan.

Now it was that our drop sunward to the Queen of Beauty really began. And it was now that something happened which at first was simply horrible.

I had been standing perfectly still for some time; I started to step past St. Cloud—and then it happened.

I don't know how to describe it. My brain and body seemed suddenly to become disassociated. I felt like one entering some horrible nightmare.

Uttering a wild exclamation, I thrust forth a hand to the wall, and then came another mystery: on the instant I found myself up in the air and doing an amazing acrobatic stunt, for I was in the act of turning upside down. Contact with the opposite wall, however, put an end to this unaccountable bouleversement of mine.

"What on earth is the matter?" I cried.

"Easy, Rider," Henry laughed. "Stay still! Let yourself relax."

"But in Heaven's name what is it?"

"You've forgotten. It's the loss of weight. Your muscles, though, have lost none of their strength."

"Good Lord!" I said. "And this thing's only begun."

"Of course. Keep a grip on your movements until you get used to it. We are now eight thousand miles from the earth, and so your weight has been reduced to about eighteen pounds."

"Eighteen pounds! Man's size and no heavier than a baby!"

"And worse is coming," smiled St. Cloud. "From now on, ethereal's the word."

"Doll baby's the word," said Henry. "For after a time, when we shall have passed out of the region in which the earth's gravity is stronger than the sun's our combined weight will be less than half a pound!"

"Good heavens!" I said. "It's unearthly now; what will it be like then, when we each weigh no more than an ounce or two?"

"We'll get used to it," he told me.

However, I never did succeed in entirely ridding myself of that terrible feeling of disembodiment.

To weigh no more than a little doll baby and yet possess the full stature and strength of a man—well, *perhaps* you can imagine the unearthliness of it.

The swing of the *Hornet* soon brought the edge of the earth's illuminated hemisphere into view. Oh, the wonder of that sight! There are other things (and perhaps—who knows?—there will be more) to dim, in a measure, the awful beauty of it; but, in my dying hour, one of the visions on which memory will linger is that tremendous sickle of light.

The crescent broadened, in what seemed a time incredibly short—though my chronometric sense had, as it were, been knocked into a cocked hat—there was no longer a crescent earth but a *half earth* hanging there below us, the terminator stretching across the vast and lonely wastes of the Pacific.

It would be difficult to decide what was the most salient thing in that stupendous view of our earth; but certainly nothing was more striking, at any rate to me, than its dominant color—a blue that was almost an azure.

Nor did this beautiful color fade away with distance. For it is a strange fact (as a study made at the Lowell Observatory on the earth-light sent to the moon had shown) that our earth shines among the starry hosts with a bluish light. And yet, when you think of it, it is not a strange thing, either; the planets have each its distinctive—its jewel—color; for instance, Venus is a dazzling white, Mars is red, while Uranus is sea-green.

The earth, as the *Hornet* swung between it and the sun, became gibbous and waxed to the full.

There, unmistakable as though laid down on map or library globe—though not, by the way, on the confounded Mercator projection, which distorts the earth's features out of all likeness to the reality—was visible that hemisphere from about midway the Pacific Ocean to Africa and Europe. There, in the west, the dawn was shaking its soft light over the calm solitudes of nature and the proud and troubled cities of mankind.

It was some little time after this that St. Cloud made his discovery, a discovery which will possess great interest for earth's astronomers—that is, if they ever hear of it. Perhaps, however, this St. Cloudian discovery will have to await "confirmation elsewhere" before incorporation with the body of astronomic fact.

"By Jo!" St. Cloud suddenly exclaimed. "Look at that!"

"What now?" asked Henry Quainfan, moving to St. Cloud's window.

"Look at the moon—look at that lunar corona."

Henry made an exclamation.

"So she's got an atmosphere after all!"

"Seems to be the nearest thing to an airy nothing possible, though—more attenuated, it looks, than a comet's caudal appendage."

"Yes," said Henry. "Things, though, are not always what they seem. But look at those stars shining through it."

As he spoke I saw it; the stars, as I soon made out, were shining through that faint nebulosity with no diminution whatever of brightness—unless, indeed, it was those stars at the satellite's limb.

A photograph of the solar corona (that beautiful mystery of which virtually no more is known by scientists today than in the time of Philostratus and Plutarch) will give a good idea of what we saw—a phenomenon rendered forever invisible to the inhabitants of the earth by the earth's luminous atmosphere. Allowance, however, must be made for the exceeding faintness of the lunar glory.

Then, when the *Hornet* had sped some thousands of miles farther on its journey, came another discovery, made by Henry Quainfan; the earth too has its corona. As seen from space, it is not surrounded by a thin atmospheric shell, but by a mystic pearly glory extending for thousands of miles out into space.

The coronal extension is greatest at the equator, and at the poles are faint rifts (like those in the solar halo) for all the world like magnetic lines of force.

The light I have called pearly, and yet I don't know whether that is really the right word or not. It is a thing of strange, ghostly beauty, fading away so imperceptibly that the eye endeavors in vain to trace its boundary. Also, unaccountable changes in form and extension, some of them incredibly rapid, are seen in it.

At length I turned my eyes from Terra and gazed out into the starry deeps. For here where there is no night (or day either for that matter) the stars are visible forever. There, separated from my hand only by the thickness of that diaphanous disk, was space itself—space, of which the wisest scientist (with his hypothetical ether and other postulates remarkable) knows nothing, save this: though it looks like nothing, yet it must be something.

For my part, at no time during our long journey could I bring myself to see that space was anything—though, forsooth, I knew that it couldn't be nothing. Just the same, however, it *was* nothing—how in the Universe could it be anything? And those awful velvety deeps of nothing crushed my soul into infinitesimalness with their placid, unchanging terribleness. One can not, I believe, imagine the terrible thing that is in that abyss of space; one must see it to know. And no man on earth ever has seen it.

On and on dashed this mysterious thing that was now our world, and ever the earth with her attendant orb (which, too, at length became full) showed a diminution of magnitude and surface detail.

Came the time when they were no longer to be looked for below but overhead; the earth (at the distance of one hundred and sixty thousand miles) had lost her hold on us, the sun's pull was now the dominant one, and the floor of the *Hornet* was sunward.

St. Cloud was the first to succumb to sleep, and I followed. At that time the earth was about a million miles distant—presenting a disk about the size of the moon's as seen in the terrestrial heavens.

To my surprise, as I disposed myself for sleep, there were no troubling fears. Unearthly the thing was, with the seeming of a dream, and yet it was—so safe!

Henry, as he monkeyed away with some apparatus, was singing in a low voice, once the following pessimistic lines of Swinburne's:

"He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep."

And then, just before unconsciousness settled upon me, as if from far away through dreamy silence came the following beautiful lines of Moore's, though the singer was not uttering them with that feeling which would have been concomitant to their utterance; perhaps I fancy, he did not even know what he was singing:

"As down in the sunless retreats of the Ocean,
Sweet flowers are springing no mortal can see,
So, deep in my soul the still prayer of devotion,
Unheard by the world, rises silent to Thee,
My God! silent to Thee—
Pure, warm, silent, to Thee.

"As still to the star of its worship, tho' clouded,
The needle points faithfully o'er the dim sea,
So, dark as I roam, in this wintry world shrouded,
The hope of my spirit turns trembling to Thee,
My God! trembling, to Thee."

Then came silence.

CHAPTER TEN

THE TWELFTH DAY

IN MY sleep I was haunted, tortured by dreams that are simply indescribable. I had thought I knew what horrible dreams were, but I never knew until then. Their origin was, of course, to be found in the strange physical changes

existent in our little world—in which my senses had slipped their moorings, as it were.

My waking was a slow affair, and reality and dream were inextricably tangled. That strange blue quality of the sunlight produced the wildest and most horrible effects upon my bewildered senses. It became a legion of ghostly monsters, from whom I madly fled for what seemed centuries of time. From this horror I was at last rescued by returning consciousness, but, indeed, it was only to find myself in another—in that indescribable feeling of disembodiment of which I have spoken.

"Morning, Rider," greeted Henry. "How did you sleep?"

"Like Dante," I told him.

"Ditto," said Morgan St. Cloud.

"And you?" I asked Henry.

"Like a top."

"Good heavens! Is there anything you're not immune to?

"I suppose I'll become Rider Farnermain again some time, somewhere," I added; "but certainly I am somebody—*something* else now. Probably if I had shrunk as I lost weight, I'd feel natural!"

"What a nightmare!" he laughed.

"But I weigh less than two ounces! Isn't that what you said?"

"That's what you do. But wait till you stand on Venus; you'll weigh about one hundred and thirty-five pounds, as against your hundred and sixty on Terra."

"Oh, happy day!"

"Wait till you see!" admonished St. Cloud.

Henry raised a finger and shook it at Morgan.

"Doubting Thomas!" he said. "That man needs much whom nothing will content."

St. Cloud smiled his dark smile.

"Let's have breakfast," he said.

At first the strangeness of the thing kept us highly keyed up, but everything palls, even (so I've heard) a sweetheart's kisses. But if the sweetheart was a Draconda, this could never be. But then, where was there ever a woman like Draconda?

Henry had brought about five dozen books—for which wise provision I became profoundly thankful. At the time, though, I had thought it absurd. To suppose that we should want to read!

But we did, for here we were imprisoned in this steel shell with absolutely nothing to do but look; and we couldn't always be looking—even though the whole Universe, from the Pole Star to the Octant, was at all times visible.

There, within a vast circle described about the southern celestial pole, were those stars which my eye had never seen on the earth. There blazed the great sun Canopus, second only to Sirius in brightness, though of a magnitude so vast that some have imagined that it must be the center of the sidereal system itself. (Another scientific pipe-dream.) There, too, by that mysterious void called the Coal Sack, shone the world-famous Southern Cross.

In my mind, however, this constellation (which, by the way, in ancient times belonged to Cenaturus and was visible in the middle latitudes of the north) is surpassed in beauty by the Northern Cross, in the constellation Cygnus—which glitters overhead in our late summer skies.

But here is a strange thing, though what meaning it may have or whether it has any, I do not presume to say: the Southern Cross—the mystic beauty of which has caught the imagination of Christendom — disappeared from the skies of the Holy City about the time Christ died on Calvary.

I have mentioned the change in the color of the sunlight—which, here in the ether deeps, was a pale, unearthly blue. And yet it really was not blue, either; it was—what shall I say?—only *bluish*.

Here enters, again, the earth's atmosphere, which scatters and destroys the blue rays from the sun, thus giving it (as seen from the earth) its yellow color. But with no atmosphere between, the great luminary is a pale blue. Towards the edge of the disk, however—because the light there comes through the solar atmosphere at an oblique angle—the blue changes to the loveliest lilac upon which the eye ever lingered. And above this lilac were seen those scarlet flames, eruptive and quiescent, upon which scientists have bestowed the meaningless name "prominences" or "protuberances,"* and enveloping all the glorious corona itself.

On the earth the prominences can be seen only during the totality of a solar eclipse—though, of course, the scientist now can study them at any time by means of the spectroscope. However, all his attempts to render the corona perceptible have failed utterly, so that this radiant stellate mystery can be seen only when the moon hides the face of the sun—a phenomenon which never lasts more than a few minutes, and can not possibly last more than eight.

**It is unfortunate that no more appropriate and graphic name has yet been found for objects of such wonderful beauty and interest.—YOUNG.*

But here (with the eye properly protected, of course) all this solar mystery and beauty was at all times visible.

Hour after hour Henry spent in studying the corona, setting down his observations with great care and fullness. This coronal nebulosity in which our sun is immersed is a thing of greater wonder and mystery than any scientist ever has dreamed, and of it some strange things could be told. But this is not the place, nor is this the pen, to set them down.

The days slowly passed, the reality (and the memory) involved in the eerie seeming of a dream—if the word day can be used in speaking of a time in which there was no day. For here in this appalling abyss, through which the *Hornet* was rushing on its way with a speed greater than that with which the earth bowls along in its orbit, there is only the profoundest night.

Outside, there was no such thing as sunshine, nothing but the intensest blackness, only pulsations (hypothetical) in the (hypothetical) ether—no such thing, Henry Quainfan said, as *temperature* even—and yet there was the sunshine flooding through our windows!

It was some considerable time before I could get this strange physical paradox through my head.

Poor Keats! He was wrong after all!

The halfway point was passed on the eighth day. On the twelfth, three-fourths of the journey lay behind us, and we began to feel that we were getting somewhere.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DE PROFUNDIS

VENUS was rapidly approaching the sun—a tiny new moon against the pearly radiance of the corona.

It was on the fifteenth day, in the "forenoon" that she moved onto the sun's disk, and Henry, so to speak, held her there. The planet was now the size of our satellite—encircled by that blazing ring of sun.

"Only a million miles more!" said Henry airily.

And now that the landing was imminent, I began to imagine—well, some of the wildest, most fantastic things that it ever entered the mind to conceive. What of mystery and horror was there, under our eyes but hidden from their searching?

Of this world on which we would soon move inhabitants, we knew no more than when we had quitted our own, save only—Henry had discovered this, with his powerful field glasses—that the rapid rotation was the true one, though just how

rapid it had not been possible to determine.

That black ball ever grew in magnitude, at length, when we were something like a half million miles distant, completely hiding from sight the disk of the great sun—twice the size of that sun which Terrestrials see.

A beautiful phenomenon now presented itself; the atmosphere was seen encircling the planet like a ring of luminescent silver. And beyond this effulgence, out in all directions, swept the coronal rays and streamers.

The planet, which had been black, or rather, the darkest of purples, slowly, as its disk encroached on the coronal radiance, turned to an ashen grey. But it was not all grey, for there, a thing of mystic beauty, was that "phosphorescence" which is visible even from the earth—explained by some observers as intense auroras (which it is) and by Lowell as the reflection of starshine from vast ice-sheets.

In all my memory there is not a single hour analogous to any of those that succeeded. I have spoken of wild things imagined, for that we were drawing to the end of our journey; but I greatly fear (and I confess it is not without shame) that now my confounded imagination went completely mad in limning, on the canvas of my brain, the things that *might* be waiting.

At length Henry Quainfan exclaimed cheerily:

"Only a quarter of a million miles farther!"

Venus now presented a disk as large as a dozen moons.

The increase in magnitude was extraordinary, and it took place with ever accelerated rapidity; in two hours' time—we then were distant about one hundred and fifty thousand miles—the area covered by the planet was equal to that of *fifty* moons.

In a half hour or so, we had entered Venus' gravitational domain—the region in which her gravity is dominant over the sun's.

"There's not the slightest sensible increase in weight, though," I remarked when Henry told me this.

"That will come later—or, rather, it will be something else."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—"

But he was studying the Venusian world again.

"I can see dark things," he said. "Shadowy, indefinite, however. Whether continents, or what, I can't make out."

I had been wondering about something—and waiting for Henry to mention it. That he had not done so was, however, not surprising. So I asked:

"Are we going to land on this night side?"

"The business is apt to be dark enough," interposed St. Cloud, "without landing in darkness."

"No," Henry returned. "What we are going to do is this: hold straight on until very near—say, ten thousand or eight thousand miles—then swing out of the planet's shadow and over to the sunlit hemisphere."

"Before or behind?" queried St. Cloud.

"Behind," said Henry.

"Why not in the zone of morning?"

"I think," said Henry, "that by the time it comes, darkness will not be unwelcome."

"I wonder!" Morgan said.

When the distance mentioned was attained, the planet presented that same aspect of mystery and darkness—save for the darting, flickering and swaying of the auroras, a phenomenon of extraordinary beauty. But we had other things to think about.

"Venus guards her mysteries to the last," observed Henry. "But—now for the world of sunlight! We ought to see something there."

"I wonder what," said St. Cloud.

"You'll soon see," Henry told him.

And we did.

The *Hornet*—her velocity greatly diminished—swung out into the sunlight, as she went round drawing in slowly towards the planet.

And now comes a curious thing. It had been bothering me for some time. At first I had thought nothing of it. Then it had increased until I could dismiss it from my mind only by an effort. Now even that was impossible, and I held silence no longer.

"I don't know what it is," I said, "but there's something queer coming over me—a feeling of extreme weakness."

"Where do you feel weak, Rider?" Henry wanted to know.

"All over, it seems."

"That's funny."

"But especially in the knees," I added, "and accompanied by dizziness."

"That's the first time I ever heard of a fellow getting dizzy in the knees!"

"If you had it," I exclaimed, "you wouldn't stand there grinning about it!"

"I've got it."

"What on earth—?"

I stared at him. He was keeping a sharp lookout, however, and did not answer for some moments.

"Your knees are all right, Rider. It's Venus that's doing it. he's restoring your weight, you know."

"Blockhead!" I exclaimed at myself. "Of course!"

"We're only four thousand miles from her surface," he said, "and so—just think of it!—you weigh about thirty-five pounds! For two weeks your weight has been virtually *nil*, so can you blame your knees for feeling dizzy?"

"Great Jupiter Ammon," I exclaimed, "what will it be like when we stand on Venusian soil? Why, I won't be able to stand; I'll have to sit."

"Ditto," said St. Cloud.

"It will pass away quickly," Henry smiled.

A moment afterwards he drew back from the window, a hand over his eyes.

"We can't stand that," he said. "Lord, what an albedo!

"Those dark glasses, Morgan," he added.

St. Cloud was already fetching them.

"What do you make of it?" I asked after a short pause.

"Not much—yet," he returned. "Wait till we get over farther."

St. Cloud and I waited in silence.

"There is a vast expanse of sunlit world now," Henry said at length, "but the glare of the atmosphere—by the goddess Urania, it's no wonder that Venus has always been a mystery to astronomers."

"Cloud-wrapped?" queried St. Cloud, bending over to look, and almost instantly drawing back, blinking and half blinded.

"Protect your eyes," Henry told him. "They can't stand that."

"No," reverting to St. Cloud's query, "she is not cloud-wrapped—that is, in the sense that her surface is completely hidden from view. There are many—countless openings. I can see land, great reaches of it, and water too. But that confounded glare—whence comes its intensity? But—"

"Yes?" said St. Cloud.

"The thing to do is to find *the* place and land!"

"March on, Macduff!" said Morgan.

As regards the high albedo of Venus, by the way, it can, in a large measure, be explained by the hygrometric state of her atmosphere; but it is a certainty that this will not account for it all.

Though a great mass of water vapor is held in suspension, yet Venus is by no means, as most observers believe, encased in an unbroken shell of cloud—a condition that would have to exist to produce (by means of water vapor) her

(Continued on page 84)

A Weird Novelette of Supernatural Terrors

The Crawling Death

By P. A. CONNOLLY

THE JUNE breeze blowing softly through the open window disturbed the papers on my desk, and also my piece of mind. My office was hot and stuffy, and the cooling zephyr whispered of better things out of doors. With a sigh, I pushed back my chair and ruefully contemplated the unanswered correspondence on my desk.

Across the way my gaze encountered the terra cotta facade and glaring plate glass of a hideous office building. Beyond it, although invisible to the physical eye, were lush meadows and cool woodlands and a beautiful hard dirt road. And my new six cylinder was standing at the curb.

I glanced at my watch. Three o'clock. With my hand at my desk, I hesitated as my correspondence stared back at me accusingly. And then:

"Mr. Hayden, I will take that dictation now," a brisk, peremptory voice declared.

"Don't let me catch you at it," I growled as I banged down the top of my desk. And, snatching up my cap, I dashed past a startled young lady and almost over a diminutive messenger boy who loomed suddenly in the door-way. He held out a telegram.

"This is where my joy ride is knocked in the head," I exclaimed savagely. Tearing open the envelope, I read the following:

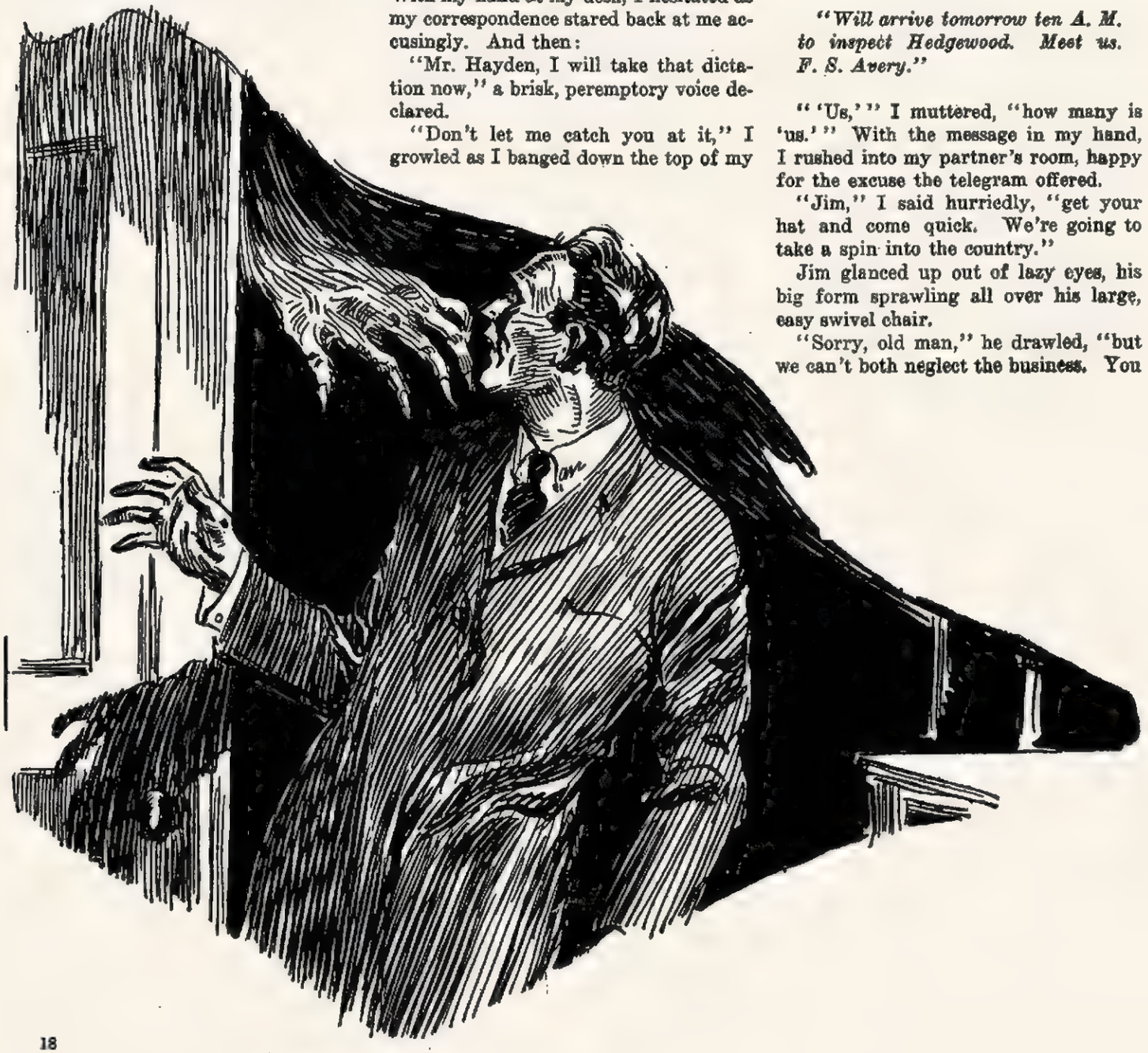
"Will arrive tomorrow ten A. M. to inspect Hedgewood. Meet us. F. S. Avery."

"'Us,'" I muttered, "how many is 'us.'" With the message in my hand, I rushed into my partner's room, happy for the excuse the telegram offered.

"Jim," I said hurriedly, "get your hat and come quick. We're going to take a spin into the country."

Jim glanced up out of lazy eyes, his big form sprawling all over his large, easy swivel chair.

"Sorry, old man," he drawled, "but we can't both neglect the business. You



run along and take your pleasure trip, and I will stay here and perform my daily toil."

"All right," I said, darting to the door. "I'll wait two minutes in the machine."

I had started the motor and was sitting at the wheel when Jim sauntered leisurely out of the building lobby.

"Jimmie," I said, as I threw in the clutch and threaded carefully through the downtown traffic, "do you believe in spirits?"

"Only in the wet, Dickie. You're not going to get extravagant and buy me a drink, are you?"

"No, Jimmie, I'm not, but I am going to take you out to the 'haunted house.'"

Jim's eyes lit up.

"Have you heard from the Avery's? Are they going to take the place?"

"I believe so," I said, handing him the telegram. "Their correspondence would indicate it, and they certainly wouldn't come way out here if they didn't mean business."

"Good," said Jim, "I am glad, however, we will have a chance to inspect the old house before it is taken over. What shape is it in?"

"The object of this trip, my boy, is to find out. Mr. Ormond said he would leave it in first-class condition, and as he has been gone only a week I don't imagine it will need anything but an airing and dusting."

Jim bent over to light a cigar as I increased the speed.

"Dick," he said, "why not take advantage of this opportunity to try to unravel the mystery that surrounds Hedgewood. What do you say to staying there all night?"

"You don't mean to say," I exclaimed, "that you take any stock in the absurd stories that are floating around about Ormond and his house?"

Jim smoked in silence for a full minute.

"Yes, Dick, I do," he replied finally.

I glanced at my companion in surprise. His face was serious. Light-hearted, frivolous Jim Akins, society man and all round good fellow, a believer in ghosts! And old-fashioned, conventional ghosts, too. I let this thought sink in as we ran along smoothly and quietly, the soft purring of the engine the only sound breaking the silence of the deserted country road we were now following.

"What is your version of the story?" I asked at length. "I have heard so many I can't keep track of them."

"Mine? Oh, mine is the orthodox one. The Ormonds always had a bad reputation. They are said to be a family of stranglers; that is, once in every second or third generation one of them has been born with this mania. The first one to develop it choked his wife to death, and was effectually cured of the habit by his father, who cut off both his hands. The natives here say that it is his spirit which now haunts the place, seeking its lost hands."

"Bosh, Jim," I said. "Mere idle superstition."

"Maybe; at the same time I—"

"I also believe, as you know," I interrupted, "in psychic phenomena, and curiously enough it was my article in last month's *Observer* on the subject that caused Ormond, who is an investigator, to place the business in my hands."

"Did Ormond come to you in person?" Jim asked quickly.

"Yes."

"The present Ormond is said to have inherited the curse, and to have the 'Ormond hand.'"

"The 'Ormond hand?'"

"Yes; immense, hairy, s p i d e r y things—"

My involuntary start swerved the machine toward the ditch.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing," I replied, and lapsed into silence.

As a matter of fact, Jim's last words had given me a disagreeable sensation. For ten days, ever since John Ormond's visit, I had been struggling with an uncanny feeling which threatened to become an obsession, and which was induced wholly by the singular malformation Jim spoke of.

I had found in Ormond a refined, highly cultured gentleman, well past middle age, charming in manner and appearance. At the time I had noticed nothing peculiar about him except that during the whole of our interview, which lasted, perhaps, thirty minutes, he persistently kept his hands hidden beneath his slouch hat which he held in his lap.

When he rose to leave his hat dropped to the floor, exposing his hands. At the sight I had instinctively recoiled. Never before had I seen such hands. Large they were, singularly large and bony, and possessing monstrous power. It was not, however, their size that had impressed me so disagreeably, but the fact that they were in constant motion. The fingers writhed and twisted about each other like snakes or, as Jim expressed it, like huge, hairy spiders.

I recalled how he stood, regarding me curiously, coldly, but making no further effort to conceal his deformity. And then, without a word, he had extended his right hand, and, without volition on my part, indeed against my will, my own hand had been drawn to arm's length and dropped inert and lifeless into that huge, hairy clasp. I shuddered then, and I shuddered again at the recollection. Imagine such a hand at one's throat. *Ugh!*

It was this, and a certain promise that he had exacted from me, and which at the time seemed absurd, that gave rise to a vague uneasiness and mistrust. Not that I apprehended any difficulty or danger, but the thought persisted that I was dealing with a madman, one who, under certain circumstances, might prove a dangerous customer.

But little was known about John Ormond, and nothing of an evil character except that which always attaches to any man who presumes to live entirely to himself. He had always occupied the old house to which we were going, as had his ancestors before him, and, with an old servant who was now with him in Europe, lived in the utmost seclusion.

This fact, and the vague rumors Jim had spoken of, were sufficient to keep the townspeople aloof, a result he evidently much desired.

CHAPTER TWO

THE exhilarating rush through the clean, sparkling air soon banished the senseless feeling of uneasiness I had been harboring, and I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the ride. Life may hold better things than a perfect going automobile, a good country road and a bright June day, but I don't know where they are or what.

Hedgewood was situated about ten miles from town, but we reached our destination all too soon. As we approached the property we slowed down in order to get a better view. The land had a frontage on the road of about one thousand feet, and ran back for perhaps twice that distance. It was, so far as we could see, entirely surrounded with a high and impenetrable hedge fence broken only at the entrance by two square stone columns, which supported a heavy iron gate.

Through the bars of this gate we could see a man at work among the shrubbery.

"Hallo!" I called.

The man looked up, and upon my signal came reluctantly toward us. He was a young fellow of twenty or thereabouts, with a rather stupid expression which gave way to distrust when I demanded entrance.

"You can't come in here," he said. "This is private property."

"Yes, I know," I answered, "but Mr. Ormond has put the place in my care."

Upon my answer, he slowly produced a key, and inserting it in the padlock swung back the massive gates.

"Do you live here?" I asked.

"No, sir, I work here in the mornin's taking care of the grounds, but I'm goin' to quit. It's too skeery."

"Well, it won't be so lonesome after this. There will be some people down tomorrow to take possession. And by the way," I added, "I wish you would help us fix up things at the house before they come. Jump in."

He shook his head vigorously.

"You couldn't get me in that house. It's bad enough out here."

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"I ain't had no trouble, and I ain't huntin' any. I'd find it quick enough if I went in there." He jerked his thumb toward the house.

"What would you find?" I asked, smiling.

He came closer to the car, his dull face looking ludicrous under its mask of terror.

"Ha'nts," he whispered, "big, hairy things that crawl around the floors like rats or spiders. Only they ain't, they're *hands!*"

With a snort of disgust, I threw in the clutch and we darted toward the house, leaving the rustic staring after us with his scythe suspended in mid-air. The front part of the grounds was covered with a heavy growth of forest trees, amid which, and about fifteen hundred feet from the entrance, stood the house.

It was a massive structure of Colonial style, and in a good state of preservation in spite of the fact that it had been built in Revolutionary days. We pulled up at the wide veranda, and, leaving Jim in the machine, I ran up the steps and finding, after some trouble the proper key, I threw open the door and entered the large central hall.

The house was dark and stuffy. Jim joining me at this moment, we went from room to room raising the shades and windows. We had both experienced a feeling of depression upon first entering the house, but this soon wore off under the refreshing influence of the light and air. The rooms were large, with high ceilings, and well furnished, most of them in the fashion of a by-gone day, but the living-room and library and several of the bedrooms were fitted out in the most modern style.

On the library table I found an envelope which contained a key and a letter addressed to me, which read as follows:

"Mr. Richard Heyden,

"Dear Sir: You will remember when I left Hedgewood in your charge, with instructions to find a suitable tenant, that I requested that neither you nor your tenant should enter the room with the red-paneled door. I now wish to emphasize that request, and to remind you that you gave me your word of honor that my wishes in this respect would be obeyed to the letter.

"I am enclosing the key to the room to be placed with the others you have, and which you will give to your prospective tenant with the same instructions you have received. It is unnecessary for me to explain why I do this except to say that I expect you to use the same care in selecting a tenant as I trust I have shown in choosing an agent. It is a mere matter of honor, or the sure penalty that follows a breach of honor.

"Yours very truly,

"JOHN ORMOND."

"Well," I said, as I strung the key on the ring with the others, "this is a nice Blue Beard proposition to put up to a practical business man. The old fellow is plumb crazy."

It was while we were on the second floor, going from room to room and opening the windows, that I had my first view of the door with the red panels. Jim was close to it at the time, in fact had started for it, when I called:

"You can't get in there, Jim; that door is locked." He continued, however, and, reaching the door, turned the knob. I saw him twist his body, and give a sudden wrench. He turned as I ran up, with a puzzled look on his face.

"Try that knob, Dick," he said.

"No use, Jim; the door is locked, and, at any rate, I have orders not to allow anyone in that room. It is Mr. Ormond's private apartment."

"Try the knob, anyway," he insisted.

I carelessly took hold of the knob and gave it a slight turn. I dropped it and looked at Jim; his eyes had a queer look in them.

"What do you make of it?"

"Nonsense, Jim; come away," and I took him by the arm and started with him down the hall.

"Dick," he said, stopping short, "there is some one in that room!"

"You're crazy, man. The knob is rusty from disuse. Now get busy. I'll go down and try again to get the boy, and you start in to dust some of the furniture. We've got a big job in front of us if we want to get back before dark."

I had been gone about ten minutes and was returning with the boy, whom I had persuaded after some effort and a generous tip to help us in the house, when I heard a roar from Jim on the second floor. At the same instant I noticed that the bunch of keys, which I had left on the library table, had disappeared. At Jim's cry the boy with me ran down the steps and across the lawn, while I mounted to the second floor, two steps at a time.

My suspicions were verified for, as I reached the landing, I saw Jim's figure pressed against the door with the red panels, which was part way open, and endeavoring vainly to crowd through the small aperture. I called to him sharply and ran hurriedly to pull him away, when suddenly he uttered a shriek, this time of fear, and, releasing his hold, fell backward to the floor with a crash. And the partly opened door closed and snapped.

CHAPTER THREE

JIM sprang to his feet, and with a cry of rage threw the whole weight of his body against the heavy door.

He was frantic with fury. I leaped upon him and by sheer strength carried him, kicking and cursing, the length of the hall where I threw him into a settee.

"There, you confounded chump!" I shouted. "For two cents I'd punch your face in. What do you mean by disobeying orders?"

We glared at each other for a moment, and then a sheepish look crept into his face.

"I'm sorry, old man," he said, "but I was dead sure there was some one in there and I wanted to find out who, or what, it was."

"Well, I hope you found out to your satisfaction."

"Not to my satisfaction, no. But I found out that there is some one, or *something*, in that room."

"Jim, are you getting crazy, or is it just plain drunk?"

"It's neither, Dick, and you know it. And you also know there is something on the other side of that door, and if you were half a man you would help me find out what it is."

"I'm man enough to keep my word, and that I hope will be the final word on this subject. Your fool yelling has scared the boy into a panic, and I suppose we'll never see him again."

And with that I marched him down to the main floor, where I started him to dusting the furniture, hoping that he would not forget the cobwebs in his brain.

But I am free to confess that I cast more than one curious glance at the room with the red paneled door, while I was performing a like service upstairs.

Before the inspection of the premises was half completed on the following day, Mrs. Avery declared enthusiastically in its favor. She was young and pretty and romantic, and the fine old place, with its historical associations, appealed strongly to her nature. On the way back to the machine, Jim detained me with a look. When we were out of hearing of the others he turned to me impetuously.

"You are not going to rent that house to those people," he asserted.

"I am not?"

"No, you are not!"

"Why?"

"Because I won't have it," he declared. "It would be criminal."

"Since when did you acquire the right to dictate the policy of the firm?"

"Damn the firm, and you, too! I say you will not allow that pretty young thing to live in this devilish place. It might mean her death, or worse. I stopped here last night!"

"You?" I demanded in amazement. "How did you get in?"

"Window," he announced.

"And did you go into the forbidden room?"

"No, I did not because I couldn't get in. I tried, I'll admit. And I guess I'm glad I didn't succeed. Now, Dick, see here. You just cool off and listen. I felt and heard things last night that convinced me that that room is occupied by something that is not human!"

"By what?"

"I don't know what. I wish I did. You believe in the supernatural, Dick, only you call it by some other name. Put these people off for a week and let's investigate. It is worth the effort, and it might save a tragedy."

"I can't, Jim," I said, somewhat impressed, and considerably mollified, by his serious manner. "They have taken the place and are going to remain tonight, and have their effects and servants come on from New York at once."

"Then," said Jim with decision, "I'll tell Mrs. Avery just exactly what has happened and scare her off."

"Jim, you're a fool," I retorted, "can't you see that Mrs. Avery is just the kind of woman who would be delighted to have a 'ghost' in the house? You just leave this to me. I'll tell Avery about the whole affair and your suspicions, and advise him to keep it from his wife. I'm bound to tell him about the room, anyway, and entrust him with the key. It will be a matter of honor with him, but judging from his looks his curiosity won't get the better of it. I wouldn't say the same for his wife. Not that she isn't strictly honorable, you know, but a woman's curiosity—"

"By the way, Jim," I added, "what did you see last night?"

"Nothing. I *felt* and *heard* it. But I won't tell you what. You politely suggested yesterday that I was drunk or crazy, and I don't care to invite a second criticism of my habits or mentality. I'll simply say this, that the danger, or evil influence, or whatever it is, is confined to the one room. The rest of the house seems to be free from it."

I left Jim brooding, and rejoined the Avery's somewhat worried, I admit, and regretting the restrictions that prohibited me from entering the room. I had always taken a deep interest in all that pertained to the supernatural, but had never had any actual demonstration of its existence. All matters pertaining to the unknown, or the unseen, life, or to life after death, held a strange interest for me. Not that I was a spiritualist in any sense of the word, or at least not in the sense in which the term is generally understood, but I did believe that there were unseen forces, not human, constantly present and working among us.

That this influence or power worked for both good and evil I had no doubt. What these forces were—whether they were human souls after transition to the spirit form, and shackled for some unknown cause to the earth life, or the product of some other sphere, or whether they were purely demoniacal—I did not know, nor do I know now. I simply know that they exist, and that they exert a constant influence upon mankind.

That something out of the ordinary was amiss with the room with the red paneled door I had no doubt. Mr. Ormond's peculiar attitude and the extraordinary effect made upon Jim, hard-headed, practical Jim, convinced me of this. But what was it?

On some pretext I got Mr. Avery away from his wife and told him all the circumstances. He looked annoyed at first and then anxiously at his wife. Finally he burst into a hearty laugh.

"All right," he said, "I'll accept the key and the secret and will agree to keep both from my wife. I don't take a bit of stock in all of this rot your friend has been telling you. At the same time I know what effect this story and these conditions would have upon my wife, who is emotional and very romantic. Furthermore, I don't want anything to interfere with the pleasure of our honeymoon here."

And when I left them, envious of their happiness and beautiful surroundings, I breathed a prayer that if any sinister presence were in that house, they might not come under its baneful influence.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE summer passed uneventfully, with no word from our tenants, except for the monthly remittance. And then, one morning late in October, as Jim and I were preparing to make a visit of inspection to several properties, I was called to the telephone, and in answer to my response a voice, which, in spite of its tremor and excitement, I recognized as Avery's, asked me to come immediately to Hedgewood. It was not until we were in the car that I told Jim, who was driving, to head for Ormond's place, and put on all speed.

"What's the trouble?" he asked, obeying my wishes, but taking time to cast a curious glance at me.

"I don't know. Avery telephoned me to come at once on a matter of great importance."

It was only good fortune that kept Jim from arrest for breaking the speed law, for twenty minutes later he drew up in front of the gate at Hedgewood. Avery was there to meet us. His face was pale, and his eyes had a look of horror in them.

"What's the matter?" I demanded, as he jumped into the car and we drove to the house.

"Brooks is dead—murdered, I think."

"Who is Brooks?"

"My brother-in-law; he came last week to spend a few days with us and—"

"Was he in the secret room?" I demanded. He flushed and stammered.

"Yes—yes. I told him the story and showed him the key, but put him on his honor not to use it. I didn't think he'd do it. But it seems he was interested in that sort of thing. And—and—" His voice trailed off, then suddenly rose, and he turned on me in a fit of fury. "What the devil do you mean by putting us in a house like that?" he snarled. "What devilish thing have you got in that room? It might have been my wife—*my wife!*"

He stood over me with distorted face and threatening gesture.

"Sit down!" I said coldly. "I told you the conditions. I know nothing of the room other than what you know. Where is your brother-in-law?"

He sank back in the tonneau, his face twitching nervously, while the car drove slowly toward the house.

"He is still in the room," he whispered with a shudder, "and I can't get him out."

"Can't?" I asked.

"No, I am not a coward, but I dare not go into that room; I tried once, and—"

He buried his face in his hands. Jim turned and looked at me queerly.

"I know why he can't go in," he said, "the *thing* that's in there won't let him."

By this time we had reached the front porch.

"Where is your wife, Avery?" I asked, laying my hand on his shoulder.

He looked up haggardly.

"Thank God she is safe! She is visiting in town and knows nothing of this."

Jim had shut off the power and darted to the front door. I followed closely, with Avery behind me. In this order we ran, leaped rather, up the broad staircase and down the upper hall. Breathless, we paused at the room with the red door panels. The door was tightly closed, but the key was in the lock.

Jim grasped the knob and turned the key. We all heard the bolt shoot sharply back. With all his strength, he threw the full weight of his body against the door, but it resisted all his efforts. Forgetting Mr. Ormond's instructions, forgetting my word of honor, I, too, added my strength to Jim's and slowly, slowly, the door yielded.

Distinctly I felt the pressure of a resisting force on the other side. Then, suddenly, the door half open, I heard a horrid, half strangled shriek from Jim, and at the same moment I felt a cold, clammy hand at my throat. An enormous hand! The fingers reached round and met at the back of my neck.

I tried to cry out. I struggled feebly, helplessly. The light flickered before my eyes, died out, and as consciousness left me I saw, clasping and clutching, the hand of John Ormond as I had seen it in real life months before.

When I came to, I found Jim and Avery bending anxiously over me. I sat up, and instinctively my hand went to my throat. A dull ache persisted there.

"What's the matter?" I asked thickly.

"Devils," said Jim, and beckoned over his shoulder.

I sat up, and then recollection came to me.

"Were you attacked, too, Jim?" I asked.

"Yes, but I was expecting it and escaped with only a slight squeeze."

"And you?" I asked, turning to Avery.

He shuddered and shook his head. "Not this time, but when I was alone."

"Did you see anything when Jim and I forced the door?"

He looked puzzled.

"No, I can't say positively. I thought, just before you both screamed, that I saw a pair of enormous hands shoot out from the doorway and clasp each of you by the throat, but it may have been imagination. I saw nothing distinctly."

We retired from before the red paneled door, which was again tightly closed, and held a consultation.

My mind was fully made up. The matter had gone too far, and was of altogether too serious a nature to allow a promise, exacted under commonplace circumstances, to obtrude and interfere under unusual and startling conditions. Besides, a plain duty lay before me. The dead body of a man was on the other side of that door and must be gotten out.

"How do you know he is dead?" The thought suggested the question.

Avery was still under strong nervous excitement.

"I was part way in the room before my throat was clutched. I saw his body on the bed, his head hanging over the side, his mouth open, and eyes staring. He was dead!"

A convulsive shudder shook him as he recalled the gruesome picture.

"Gentlemen," I said, "we have got to get the body out." And to Jim: "and you and I will solve the mystery."

"I'm with you." And Jim's lower jaw clenched.

"If this is the work of human beings, which I strongly suspect, the matter will be comparatively simple, although more dangerous. If it is of supernatural agency, it may not be so easy. Let me say to start with, gentlemen, that I believe in the supernatural. I believe there are unseen forces about us with power, at times, to inflict harm upon human beings. This may be one of the times. The only way to counteract or overcome the power of one of the beings of the outer circle is by an absolute freedom from fear. A brave front alone will not do. There must positively be no shadow of fear in your heart. Do you understand, Jim?"

"Yes," he said, and I saw by the look on his face that he meant it.

"And you, Avery?"

He was sitting with his face in his hands, his whole attitude one of utter misery.

"I'm not up to it, boys," he muttered, without looking up.

"Then you go down to the lower floor, or, better still, go out into the grounds. The air will do you good. We'll join you presently."

"Jim," I said in a low tone, when Avery had shuffled down the stairs, "we will put this in the form of a test. If there is a man in that room, we will meet with the same powerful resistance when we attempt to enter. If it is not a man, if the force in there is of supernatural origin, there will be little, if any, opposition if we show that we are entirely unafraid. Do you understand?"

He nodded impatiently. Jim had been a famous football player in the old college days, and I knew him to be a man of undaunted physical courage. I could not ask for a better companion in any venture requiring cool nerve and daring.

Together, we approached the door, and this time it was my hands that grasped the knob and key.

"Jim, you have no fear!" I asserted it as a fact.

"No!"

"Nor have I. Come."

I turned the key and the knob at the same moment. There was a suggestion of resistance which vanished almost instantly. The door was thrown open and we both crossed the threshold. A cold air, like a gust of wind, struck our faces.

The room was dimly lighted from partly opened slats of a blind at one of the windows. And then a peculiar thing happened. A pair of heavy curtains, hanging before a closet or alcove, were drawn apart and fell together as though separated by unseen hands.

CHAPTER FIVE

JIM looked at me, and then with one bound, leaped toward the curtains and tore them apart. He disappeared from view, but reappeared almost instantly, brushing the front of his coat.

"Nothing in there, but I felt something like a big rat crawling up my coat. *Ugh!*"

We gazed about the room. It was furnished in the style of the past century, with heavy walnut chairs and dresser, and a massive canopied bed from which the curtains had been removed. And upon the bed lay the figure of a man in the position which Avery had described. It took but one glance to see that he was dead. Together we lifted the body and carried it, without molestation, to the hall. Instantly the door closed with a crash behind us.

We bore the body of the man to the room which he had occupied in life. Then we took Avery and his effects back to town with us and left him at the house where his wife was visiting. I promised to get a doctor's certificate, and to see an undertaker, and have the body properly prepared for shipment to New York. Fortunately, there were no marks upon it, and as the man was known to have had

serious heart trouble no fears of embarrassing explanations were anticipated.

Upon my return to the office, I found a cablegram awaiting me. I tore it open with trembling fingers. It was from Italy and signed "Ormond," and contained this brief statement: *"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."*

I read the characters with quickening pulse. Was it possible that the man was aware of what had happened? Could he have an agent concealed in the house to keep him informed of all that occurred? Or was the man so finely constituted and possessed of so keen a knowledge of, and power over, the unseen forces of the universe that he could keep in constant telepathic communication with affairs in all parts of the world?

My reading and belief did not forbid the thought; I knew Ormond was in Europe, I had seen the notice of his arrival in Liverpool months before, and had received several letters from him acknowledging remittances, one of which had arrived but three days before. The cable bore the date of the preceding day—the day on which Brooks was murdered.

I laid it on my desk and shuddered. In my imagination I saw the yellow slip of paper assume the grisly shape of John Ormond's hand. Was it possible that I, too, would fall a victim to that terrible unseen power which we had left behind at Hedgewood?

But no! and I clenched my teeth. I was possessed of a still greater power, and I would cope with and overcome that other force, or lose my life in the effort. *For Jim and I had determined to spend that night in the room with the red paneled door.*

It was dusk when we arrived. The house looked especially gloomy and uninviting in the closing darkness.

The trees, stripped of their foliage, appeared gaunt and spectral against the sky. There was no wind. The usual woodland sounds, the sighing of the trees, the scraping of boughs, the twitter of birds and insects, were absent. An ominous silence brooded over the place.

I waited at the top of the steps while Jim was doing something about the car. He had shut off the power. I noticed that he examined the gasoline and water tank, and then, before joining me, he started the engine and immediately stopped it. Was Jim preparing for an emergency, I wondered? Was he going to flunk at the last minute? Courage in broad daylight sometimes evaporates under the spell of darkness. But one glance at Jim's face as he rejoined me was reassuring. The square set jaw, the eager look in his eyes—these did not denote a failing courage.

The intense silence was broken by the shooting back of the heavy bolt in the front door. Together, we entered the hall and stood a moment in the darkness. The house felt close and oppressive. Walking over to the switch, I flooded the rooms with light. Jim threw open several of the windows and let in the cool autumn air.

"There, that looks and feels better. How is your nerve, Dick?"

"I've got a grip on it," I replied, "but we're not to have such things as nerves tonight."

"Right you are; but I've brought this along as a substitute." He showed the butt of an automatic.

I smiled.

"What do you expect to do with that, Jim? Shoot ghosts?"

"I'll shoot anything that shows itself, man or ghost, or—devil."

Jim went to the piano and woke the echoes of the old house with selections of popular songs, while I found a congenial book in the library, and for an hour or more lost myself in its contents. About ten o'clock Jim sauntered in, smoking a pipe, and looking bored.

"There's nothing doing down here, Dick," he said. "Let's go upstairs."

I laid down my book and together we mounted the steps. On the landing I turned the electric switch which lighted the hall. Back in the shadows we could see the dull gleam of the red paneled door. Not a sound broke the stillness. The thick carpet on the hall floor buried the sound of our foot falls as we approached the room. For a moment we paused in front of it, while I selected the key. And then, just as I was about to insert it in the lock, the knob rattled loudly. We looked at each other.

"Are you afraid, Jim?"

"No!" he answered.

"Because, if you are, you'd better not go in. Remember Brooks."

He paled slightly and swallowed once or twice.

"I'm not afraid, I tell you."

"Very well; here goes."

I turned the key and the knob, and pressed against the door. Again I felt a resistance which gradually yielded, then ceased altogether, and, the door giving away under my weight, I was precipitated into the room. The place was dark, but Jim had brought an electric flashlight which he was now darting around the room.

Suddenly he gave a startled exclamation.

"Quick, Dick, look!"

He pointed toward the bed. It had been made up probably years before. The linen and counterpane, once snowy white, were yellow with age. The impression of Brooks' body still remained. Then, before our eyes, the pillows were taken up and laid at the foot of the bed, the covering was turned back, and the pillows returned and neatly arranged, just as a maid would do. Only there was no maid, absolutely nothing. Jim's hand was clutching my arm.

CHAPTER SIX

"EASY, old man, easy! This is only part of the performance," I said. "We are going to remain for the whole show."

Do not think that I am endowed with any superlative degree of courage. I am not. If I had obeyed my natural impulse I should have fled in a panic that instant. In fact, I should never have gone into the room. But I had undertaken this thing deliberately. I knew, or believed I knew, the conditions and consequences. If this were mere trickery, a close and careful investigation would reveal it. If it were of supernatural origin and some malevolent force was at work in this room, I was convinced that a cool and fearless attitude would overcome it.

The whole matter lay with one's nerves. If one had absolute control over them, the powers of darkness could inflict no injury. My studies and investigations into the occult assured me of this. And it was because Jim had no such assurance, because his courage was purely physical, that I was apprehensive on his account.

As if in contradiction to my thoughts, he uttered a grim laugh.

"Well," he said, "if this is an invitation for us to go to bed, I'm going to accept." And, handing me the flashlight, he deliberately walked over and threw himself upon the bed.

"It's too early, Jim," I said, vastly relieved at this display of nerve. "I'm not a bit sleepy, and besides we have some work to do."

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and brushed his clothes violently.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"The rats in this house are awfully cheeky," he said. "I felt two as big as cats crawling up my legs."

I had seen no rats, although I had kept the circle of light full upon him.

We had brought a coil of wire and some electric fixtures, and while I held the door open, Jim tapped the hall wires and in a few minutes we felt more comfortable in a well-lighted and ventilated room.

A large, old-fashioned grate occupied one end of the room, and as on our first

visit we had discovered a fuel box in one of the empty rooms, we presently had a cheerful fire burning.

I had brought the book from the library which had so interested me, and, lighting my pipe and finding an easy chair, I prepared for such comfort as I might enjoy under the circumstances. I looked up from time to time at Jim, who was reclining on a couch, smoking placidly.

"Jim," I asked presently, "did you ever read 'The Haunted and the Haunters?'"

"No," he replied, "what's it about?"

"It's a ghost story with two men in a similar position to our own. One of them ran!"

"And left the other in the lurch? He must have been a rum guy; but that's the way with stories. They're always making a hero of one and a coward of the other fellow.

"Say, Dick," he continued, with a yawn, "let's have a game of Cribbage."

"Good thought," I answered. "Got a deck of cards?"

"Yes, I brought 'em along for the purpose."

While were arranging the table and chairs, Jim walked over to what appeared to be a heavy, box-like frame on the far wall.

"Hello!" he said, and then: "It's the picture with its face turned toward the wall."

He proceeded at once to turn the picture, for such it was, face outward. It proved to be a full length portrait of a young man of twenty-five or thereabouts, dressed richly in the style of the latter part of the Eighteenth Century. The face was an evil one, the eyes hard, the mouth cruel and treacherous. It was the likeness, undoubtedly, of one of the Ormonds, as the family characteristic stood forth prominently. The hands—enormous, monstrous hands—were depicted with careful detail as if the owner were proud of them.

The repugnant face, and those fearful hands, made a distinctly disagreeable impression on me, and I asked Jim to return the picture to its former position. He endeavored to do so, but found it immovable. Again he tried with all his strength, and failed. And at that moment a horrid laugh sounded through the room. Jim turned on me, his lips twitching.

"What did you do that for?" he demanded.

"I didn't," I said. "But come, if it is any satisfaction to the owner of that face to have it exposed to view, why let it hang. Let's get to our game."

We drew up our chairs. Jim sat with his back to the picture, the hands of which drew my eyes like a magnet; the whole figure brooded over us like an evil spirit. We played indifferently for an hour. Jim stopped to fill and light his pipe. As he was about to reach for the deck which lay in the center of the table, it was quickly lifted and, unsupported in the air, the cards began to fall in two piles. We watched them with staring eyes and rigid muscles.

Some unseen being was sorting the cards!

"The euchre deck," Jim whispered. "It wants to get into the game."

As if in confirmation of the words, the pack containing the face cards was taken up and skillfully shuffled. It was then passed to me to cut. I cut. Again the pack was raised and two cards drifted to me, two others falling at the empty space between Jim and me. This was repeated until I had twelve cards. The other twelve were then raised, were slipped rapidly between invisible fingers just as a skillful player would do, and then hung motionless, fan shape.

"I'm not in it, it seems. Play the game, Dick, if you know what it is."

"I think I do, but I'll know in a second," and I picked up and sorted the cards, made a discard and led an ace. Immediately a small card in the same suit dropped on my lead. The strange game continued.

Suddenly Jim leaned forward and looked into the hand of my opponent. I heard a smacking sound, like a blow, and Jim drew back with a cry, a livid mark on his face.

And then, before I could say a word, he sprang to his feet and, drawing his gun, shot once, twice, into the center of the suspended hand of cards. They flew in all directions, and at the same instant the automatic was snatched from his hand and he reeled violently backward and fell to the floor with a crash.

For a moment he lay there, then rose slowly on his elbow and stared stupidly around. Suddenly his eyes fixed and bulged. He got to his hands and knees and backed toward the wall, crab fashion. His eyes remained fastened, immovably, on some object that seemed to be creeping upon him. And then a blood-curdling shriek came from his lips, and with a cry of "Take them away, Dick, take them away!" he rose, pulled open the door and dashed down the hall and the stairs.

In another second I heard the crash of the front door, the sound of the quick explosions of the engine in the automobile, its rapidly retreating echo, and then silence—utter, absolute silence. It had all happened so quickly I had been petrified into inaction.

With a cry of fear, I leaped to the door, only to have it slammed to in my face. With desperate, heart-breaking efforts, I endeavored to wrench it open. Useless!

I was trapped, alone, in the room with the red paneled door!

CHAPTER SEVEN

SLOWLY I regained my equilibrium and calm. Not without the strongest exercise of will power and reasoning, however.

Why I was not crushed, annihilated, in that moment of demoralization, I will never know. I only know that for some purpose the unseen power in the room was quiescent. But not for long.

As I turned, with my back to the door, I became dimly aware of some presence in the room. The temperature began to fall rapidly, although the fire burned brightly.

By this time I had recovered fully my grip upon my nerves and I waited, tensely but calmly, whatever was to follow. Then, quickly, like a candle, the fire was snuffed out.

"Come!" I said, "that trick has been worked threadbare. Can't you originate something new? I suppose," I continued, merely for something to say, "that the light will go next, although I am curious to know how you will get around a comparatively new element like electricity."

As if in answer to my words the thirty-two candle power lamp went out. I was in blank darkness! With an effort I repulsed the sudden rush of fear that assailed my heart; I resolutely ignored the hideous sensation that played up and down my spine, and, groping my way over to where the lamp hung, I reached for it, at first confidently, then, as it evaded my grasp, with frantic, desperate hands that stabbed and clawed the midnight gloom. At last, with a sigh of infinite relief, my hands closed round the still warm globe. *The key had not been turned.*

Back to the door I went with a leap, and peered through the keyhole. The lights in the hall were burning. I reached up and caught the cord that had passed through the crack made by the door settling away from the jamb. I pulled this gently, then walked, with the cord passing through my fingers, until I came again to the lamp. The circuit was intact. And yet I could get no light!

All of this time I was conscious of a presence near me. I felt something fol-

lowing my every step. I knew instinctively that if I gave way for a moment to the fear that was driving me, it would leap upon me. I again backed to the wall and waited. I had no knowledge of the time, of how long I had been alone.

The silence and darkness became unbearable. If the *thing* that was in the room with me would only show itself, would utter some sound, it would be a relief. This waiting, this suspense, were more terrible than any sight or sound could possibly be, and I knew that unless something happened quickly, my nerves would give way.

And then, after what seemed hours, when I felt that I must shriek aloud, I saw in the far corner of the room a dim, misty figure shaping itself into the darkness. At first I could make nothing of it, but gradually it resolved itself into the figure of a boy. A boy of about ten years of age, with yellow curls hanging about his face.

He was dressed in a rich, black velvet suit, silk hose and a pair of high-heeled, silver-buckled shoes. The face was handsome, but too matured for one so young. The eyes were hard and cruel, the mouth treacherous. Somewhere I had seen those features before.

My eyes lifted for a moment to the wall where the picture hung. I took a quick inhalation. Although the rest of the room was in pitch darkness, the picture stood out boldly, in a light seemingly emanating from itself. The eyes were gazing upon the figure of the boy below and, it seemed to me, the lips twisted into a sardonic grin. I understood now. The boy was the original of the picture, which was made at a later period in his life.

My attention was now called to the figure of the boy. He seemed to be calling some one. Presently into the field of vision romped a big Newfoundland puppy with which the boy played for a few minutes. In the play, the dog leaped upon the boy, bore him to the ground and soiled his clothes sadly.

In an instant he was on his feet, his face distorted with rage, his eyes gleaming savagely. He sprang upon the dog, and the monstrous Ormond hands, looking particularly grotesque on one so small, clenched around the dog's neck, the fingers interlaced at the back. The terrible grip did not relax until the dog rolled over and lay still.

The boy got to his feet and was viciously kicking the unresponsive figure when a woman, apparently a servant, appeared on the scene and seemed to remonstrate with the youth. He flew at her in a rage, with great hands outstretched, but she fled in terror.

Suddenly he cringed and trembled violently, looking about with furtive eyes for a way to escape, as the figure of a man stood before him. A tall man, stern and dignified. He was an Ormond, and apparently the father of the boy. He pointed accusingly to the dog. The boy cowered in terror.

Then all the figures vanished, and I was again in blank darkness. During all this time not a sound had broken the intense silence.

Again my staring eyes saw a vague form taking shape. Again the picture flamed into view. This time the vision was that of a young man of twenty-eight or thirty. It was the exact counterpart of the picture on the wall, only more evil, more sinister looking.

Presently he was joined by a young and beautiful woman. She seemed to be pleading for something. He repulsed her. She fell to her knees, her hands uplifted. Then the same look I had seen when he strangled the puppy leaped into his face, and with a snarl which I could almost hear, he fell upon her and bore her to the earth, his horrid fingers encircling her fair young throat.

I tried to tear my eyes away, but could not, and there, before my sickening vision, I beheld a re-enactment of the terrible crime that had been committed in this room years before.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PRESENTLY the form of the woman lay quiet, and the man rose to a crouching position. His eyes glared and then changed to an expression of terror. Before him stood the figure of his father, his finger pointing accusingly to the still form of the woman.

Again utter blackness for what seemed an interminable period. And yet again I saw an emanation from nothingness, that grew into a filmy form—this time the elder Ormond. He stood pondering deeply. Then a look of resolve, of terrible unchanging resolve, gathered upon his face. He clapped his hands. A servant appeared and received some instructions.

Presently there walked, or rather slunk, into the room the figure of the younger Ormond. He seemed to be livid with terror. Some words were spoken. Then the older man took a handerchief and blindfolded the younger one. Without resistance, he was lead to a heavy table where he was made to kneel down. At a word of command, the huge, monstrous hands were extended and laid palm downward upon the table. Then the father, taking a large sword from the wall, stepped to the side of his son and with one blow sheared off both hands.

Instantly the light flashed on, the fire burned cheerfully in the grate. The picture on the wall looked down sardonically. Was it then all a dream?

I looked around for Jim. He was not there. I looked at my watch. But five minutes had elapsed since he left me. Again I tried the door and the window. Both were immovable. For one moment I considered jumping to the ground, but I discarded the idea immediately on account of the height. And again the fire in the grate disappeared. It was snuffed out like a candle. The electric light followed, and thick darkness once more enveloped me.

Watching intently, I saw the shapeless mist gather in the far corner, take form and assume the semblance of life. This time it was the figure of a bent old man with scanty gray locks. He was sitting on a bench, crooning back and forth over some object that lay in his lap. Suddenly he raised his head and peered eagerly, almost wistfully, at the picture on the wall which, in the midst of the glow surrounding it, leered back mockingly. The figure raised its arms as if in supplication, and I saw that both hands were gone at the wrists.

It was the face of Ormond, the uxoricide, old, hardened, evil, as it must have looked in the later years of his life. The old eyes fell again to the object on his lap which he fondled with his stumps of arms. They took life and began to crawl up the front of his coat, and I saw to my horror that they were severed hands. Large, hairy, monstrous hands!

For a time they nestled, one on either shoulder. The old man still weaved back and forth, his twisted mouth mumbling words. Suddenly he stopped and listened intently. One of the hands seemed to be imparting information to him, for it writhed and ran up and down his body. Then it stopped and poised motionless on his knees, and I saw that it had raised itself on three fingers and thumb, its long bony index finger pointing outward.

It was a moment before I realized the fearful significance of this. When I did I almost collapsed. The great, grisly hand, with rigid index finger was pointing directly at me!

Slowly the old eyes followed the direction of the finger; slowly, slowly, they raised and at last looked full into mine. In vain I tried to lower my lids, to turn my eyes away. Those fierce, cruel, devilish orbs held them immovable. He leaped

quickly to his feet. A look such as I had seen when he strangled the dog and the woman distorted his features.

He sprang toward me, then stopped short and looked at his useless arms. He gnashed his teeth in rage, but quickly whispered something to the two hands that were hanging to his shoulders. They seemed to understand, for immediately they crept rapidly from their perch, down his body, and to the floor. For an instant only they paused. Then, like monstrous spiders they crawled slowly in my direction.

I realized that the crucial moment had come, that now or never I must assert my will power, my courage, or I would never leave the room alive. Stifling the shriek that rose to my lips I summoned all my remaining courage. I reiterated aloud my oft-repeated theory that the spirits of the dead could have no power over the living in the face of undaunted courage. Was mine undaunted? Yes! Yes! I shrieked it aloud. No power, however devilish, would overcome it.

And slowly the creeping, crawling hands, like huge, hairy spiders, approached me. They reached my feet. My heels kicked the wall. They had now clasped my ankles. Their clutch burned like fire. The figure of the old man was dancing in fiendish glee. The picture on the wall seemed to gloat. And now I felt them crawling up my legs, the long nails of each finger digging sharply into my flesh.

My own hands seemed powerless. As they hitched themselves heavily, cumbrously over my stomach and heart I turned deathly sick. I felt I must soon give way. I don't know that I screamed, probably I did, for the inside of my throat ached intolerably.

If I could only get power into my own hands! I was no weakling. I could cope successfully with strong men. To use my hands before those others reached my throat! The vulnerable point. I thought of Brooks, of Jim—the coward! I gasped for breath. Oh, God, help! With one supreme effort, I unloosed the power that held me.

My own hands shot with desperate, superhuman strength to those monstrous things that were already clutching my throat. With one last effort of will I tore first one, then the other, from my throat and with a shriek of horror and loathing I dashed them from me. I heard a crash of glass. The picture before me was dissolved from view. I reeled and fell just as a loud *honk! honk!* sounded on the air.

I was dimly conscious of a crash of doors, of a blinding light, of Jim's voice —then utter, complete oblivion.

CHAPTER NINE

LITTLE more remains to be told. Three months later I was removed from the hospital, a broken man. The serious attack of brain fever, following my terrible experience, was all but fatal.

During the whole period Jim never left my side. His remorse was pitiable. He has never ceased to execrate his cowardice in forsaking me.

But I do not now hold him a coward. On the contrary, I consider his act in coming back for me, after what he had seen, one of sublime courage.

I have no explanations to make, no theories to advance. I must add, however, that the portrait was found to have been torn from top to bottom, and the heavy glass protecting it, shattered into a thousand pieces. Back of the canvas was a cavity, in which rested the skeletons of two immense hands, and a manuscript which, so far, has defied all attempts to decipher. It may contain an explanation of the facts which I have related.

I no longer take any interest in the occult. My one thought and hope now is to live down, if I may, the recollection of that night of horror.

One word more. The last Ormond was found dead in bed, in a little hotel in Italy, on the same night I spent in the room with the red-paneled door.

A Heroine of the Black Hole

ON the hottest day in June a nineteen-year-old girl was locked in the terrible dark cell of a British convict ship lying in the harbor at New Bedford, Massachusetts. She was kept there for twenty-six hours, chained to a bolt in such a position that she could neither sit, lie down, nor stand up, and in that time she was given one meal of bread and water.

She had not committed crime or misdemeanor, and she was not a convict. Neither was she acting for the movies. She was Miss Carolyn Pittsley, aspiring to the title of New Bedford's Bravest Girl. She won it, too, though she came out of the cell known as the Black Hole unable to stand or see after her 26-hour torment. A hundred dollars in gold was the more substantial reward for her courage and endurance.

This old convict ship, the Success, which has not been used as a prison since 1865, has been fitted out as a replica of the three floating prisons (the Success being one of them) once in use in England and Australia. It has been exhibited in many American seaports and in each the captain urges the bravest girl in the city to come forward and earn a hundred dollars as well as considerable reputation for pluck.

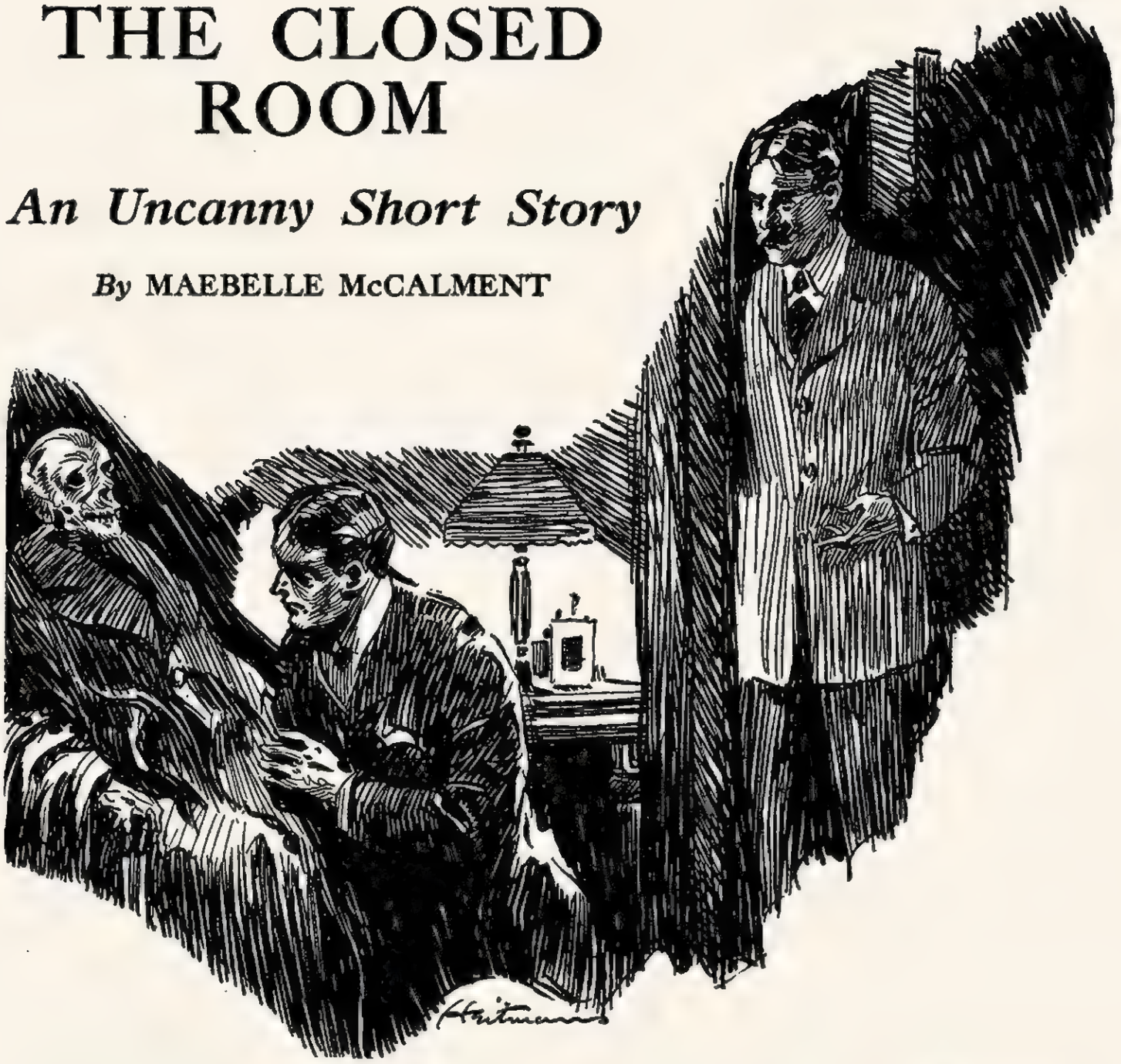
On the deck of the Success one sees the balls and chains of various weights which the convicts were forced to wear during their imprisonment; the rings to which they were fastened when flogged, a common punishment then; the curious iron tank kept filled with salt water into which the punished men were thrown to revive if they fainted under the lash.

Two lower enclosed decks are lined with windowless cells, in each a waxwork figure clad in the prison garb, stamped with the government broad arrow, looking startlingly lifelike in the dim light. The figures are effigies of real prisoners who occupied these or other cells at one time, and each now has his name on the cell door. Besides these wax figures, there are on exhibition several waxwork groups, one showing the murder in a quarry of a particularly cruel keeper once in command of a convict ship. This murder, though the convict murderers were executed, led to the investigation and reform of the convict ship system.

THE CLOSED ROOM

An Uncanny Short Story

By MAEBELLE McCALMENT



DR. KING WAYLAND, the eminent brain specialist, so far forgot his professional dignity as to lean tensely forward and gaze at Anne Norman in horror and amazement, intermingled with incredulity.

The eyes that looked back at him did not gleam with the light of insanity; yet had the story with all its gruesome details fallen from other lips, without hesitancy he would have pronounced it nothing more nor less than a grotesque hallucination. Now he mentally tabulated it the frenzy of a tortured brain. He noted the quivering lips, but the eyes were the same steadfast, unwavering eyes that had won him ten years before when her husband, Richard Norman, and he were pals in medical college.

At the time of his graduation, which preceded that of King Wayland by a year, Dick Norman had married Camille West, the gay college widow, and had left shortly for a year of travel in America and abroad. He had already come into his father's vast estate, and had studied medicine merely for the love of it.

Three months later came the terrible tragedy in his life. While crossing the Great American Desert his party had been overtaken by a severe sand storm, and in some unaccountable manner Norman and his wife were separated from their guides. They had wandered on and on for days, without food or water, until Mrs. Norman could go no farther. Norman staggered on toward the alluring, ever-elusive mirage, or the visionary gray spiral of smoke he imagined he saw in the dim distance. Later he was found in an unconscious condition by two prospectors who took him to their shack in the foot-hills and nursed him back to life. It was a year later, when all that remained of the beautiful dashing Camille Norman was found and identified by a few shreds of clothing, her wedding ring, and a string of emerald beads.

In the meantime Norman had returned to Denver and won from Wayland the woman he loved, Anne Paddington. King Wayland took his loss like a man, going abroad immediately for his two years of study in Berlin.

For eight years he had toiled inces-

santly in his chosen profession and had attained a reputation as an insanity expert. He had seen very little of the Normans, for he had no time for society.

Doctor Reed, Norman's family physician, had called him in consultation that morning. Mrs. Norman had not left her room for two months. She had taken a peculiar aversion to her husband, screaming and becoming hysterical if he attempted to touch her, then lying in a state of semiconsciousness for hours after.

"I believe her condition due to shock," Doctor Reed had vouchsafed, "but I frankly admit that is as far as I can get. Mr. Norman says it cannot possibly be through any fault of his, so I can come to only one conclusion, that the aversion is simply obsession of an unbalanced mind."

While he was making his examination, Mrs. Norman had seized an opportune moment to whisper frantically:

"Send them all away. I will talk to you. Oh, King, please—"

Her voice had trailed off in a piteous little quiver.

He noded his head understandingly without stopping in his deft movements. Again she lay quiet, but her wonderful eyes never left his face. When he had finished, he turned and spoke a few words to the doctor and nurse. They went out and left him alone with his patient.

Then it was he had listened to one of the most tragic stories that ever fell from human lips. One could scarcely imagine anything so hideous.

"OH, KING, only make me well," she had added. "I must leave this house. I have begged and implored him to tear down that east wing. It has always been a bone of contention between us, but he only laughed at me. And now that I know, I can't go on living under this roof. I couldn't tell this to strangers. They would only think me mad. They would not believe me, but it is the truth of the thing that is killing me. I know I am right, and yet it war hard to believe my own eyes. Please find a way to help me. It is Dick who is insane, and you must save him, save him from himself. Will you promise me?"

Once again Doctor Wayland was the mere man, and his face worked with emotion as he leaned over the woman he had loved—yes, still loved—and gave her his promise.

"I'll find a way, Anne, but I'm doing it for you, not for him."

For a moment she lay back, breathing deeply, and then the wan face relaxed into a relieved smile.

"Thanks, King," she whispered; "but wait, I must tell you more. Just behind that massive bookcase in Dick's study is a door leading into the wing. It is fastened with an intricate lock which even a locksmith cannot open. I have had two try it."

"Were you always curious about the east wing?"

"Curious? Yes, but never suspicious until things happened recently to make me so. At first he told me he was using it as a laboratory, and owing to the deadly nature of the chemicals no one must enter it but himself. That satisfied me, until one evening I caught the lettering on a big package he carried into the house. It was after the lamps were lighted, but as I was standing in the shadows he failed to see me as he passed through the study. *That package bore the name of a prominent women's furnishing goods house.*

"At another time I saw him buy a diamond necklace and give a small fortune for it. I stepped quickly behind a convenient screen in the jewelry store, for as the next day was my birthday I supposed it was for me. I managed to make my escape and reached home before he did. On his arrival I met him at the door. He caressed me carelessly, and I felt the box in his pocket. He entered his study hurriedly, saying he had to write some letters. I peeped in a moment later. *The study was empty.*

"I knew he had gone into the east wing. I waited just outside the mysterious door. I was determined to get a glimpse into the room as he came out, but I was doomed to disappointment, for when he saw me he gave me such a push that it almost sent me to the floor. He was bitterly angry. When he removed his coat a moment later to put on his smoking jacket, I picked it up to hang it upon a rack. The box was gone from the pocket."

"You are sure?"

"Yes. It was a large velvet case. I could not be mistaken. Since then I have seen thousands of dollars' worth of jewels and women's wearing apparel go into that room. Once I thought the place must be his rendezvous with other women, and the last time he went to New York I had workmen search for an underground entrance, but after two days they gave it up. I went on pondering and waiting, and at last my opportunity came.

"One night, on passing through the grounds after attending a club meeting, I noticed a tiny shaft of light from a wing window splitting the darkness outside. Without an instant's hesitation, I pulled one of the lawn seats under the window, and climbing upon it I glued my eye to the slit in the heavy green blind that seemed to be nailed to the casing all around the window, so closely did it fit. Then *I saw it.*

"At last I understood. I had the presence of mind to draw the seat back to its place. I staggered a few steps and fainted. The chauffeur found me and carried me in. No one ever knew what had happened. I haven't left my room since. Oh, King, if he ever puts his hands on me again, I believe I shall die."

A SHIVER of repulsion shook the woman's whole frame. She lay back among her pillows like a delicate flower broken from the mother plant. So thought the man who watched her.

Impulsively he got to his feet. He had come to another one of his habitual quick decisions.

"Anne, I will do everything I can for you. The story you have told me is almost unbelievable, and I can understand how you could not tell it to a stranger. I will investigate. In the meantime I will tell your husband that he must stay away from you if he hopes for your recovery. I will make arrangements for my assistants to take charge of my practice and I will stay in the house for a few days."

Her nervous fingers crept up his arm.

"Oh, King, will you do this?"

He smiled reassuringly into her upturned eager face.

"Yes. If such an unreal thing is possible, I will find it out."

She settled back again with a long drawn sigh of relief, and her closely drawn lips relaxed.

He called the nurse and went directly to Norman in his study.

"You are leaving your wife's case absolutely in my hands?" he asked abruptly.

Richard Norman looked up from the book he was reading and gazed meditatively at his old friend for a moment before he answered.

"Wayland, I know your reputation, and of course I value your opinion. If you think it is best, the case is in your hands. What have you to tell me?"

"Not much, but I want the privilege of remaining in the house a few days in constant attendance. In the meantime I want you to humor her. Keep out of her sight entirely."

The man before him winced, but he went on:

"Keep yourself out of the house as much as possible. Do not let her even

hear your footsteps in the halls. Be quiet about your comings and goings." He saw the man's lips quiver, and added more kindly: "I know it is hard, old man, but I want a chance to study her under those conditions, and I believe in a few days I can give you a complete diagnosis, and even suggest a cure. Will you give me your assistance?"

Again Dick Norman studied him through half closed eyes; then suddenly he got to his feet and held out his hand.

"Wayland, I guess I have been rather nasty to you in the last ten years, and I will admit it was deucedly hard for me to give in to Reed and call you. I haven't forgotten that Anne liked you at one time, but old chap, I'm willing to bury the hatchet if you will only pull Anne out of this."

Wayland took the offered hand.

"Let's forget it," he answered with brusque emphasis. "Anne must be our only thought now. I must have your cooperation."

"All right, King. I will stay at one of my clubs down town where I can be constantly in touch with you by telephone."

The next morning found Doctor Wayland installed in one of the many guest chambers of the beautiful suburban home of the Normans. As Dick had kept his word and left early for the city club, he found himself in full possession of the field. The first thing he did was to go for a reconnoitering walk in the spacious grounds. He circled around the east wing. It was a two-story structure built of stucco. The rest of the house was of solid stone. He came upon the gardener, overseeing the pruning of some bushes.

"Beautiful place here." He spoke casually, and added after a pause, "The grounds are wonderful. You keep them in perfect condition."

"Yes, sir, I do my best, sir. I just put in the landscape work this year."

"It certainly adds to the effect, and the house is a wonderful background for it all."

"Yes, sir."

Doctor Wayland turned and eyed it reminiscently.

"I used to come here a great deal years ago, but I don't remember that stucco wing. Has it been built on in the last ten years?"

The man raised his eyes to the wing in question and his face clouded as he answered:

"Oh, no, sir. I have been here twelve years and it has been here since I can remember. The servants would all feel better if it wasn't there; they say it is haunted, or bewitched, or something."

Dr. Wayland drew a cigar from his pocket and lighted it with one of his slow, deliberate movements; then he turned toward the gardener.

"Is that so? I guess most places have some kind of story attached to them. What time of night do the ghosts walk here at Normandale?"

He laughed, but no answering laugh echoed his, and he noted the seriousness of the old man's face.

"We haven't ever seen any ghosts; it's just sounds, sir. Nobody but Mr. Norman has entered that ground-floor room for nine years. He goes through a queer-looking door from his study. It is fastened with some kind of combination lock that looks like an alarm clock."

Wayland smiled again.

"I suppose he does that to keep prying people out of trouble. Certain chemicals in inexperienced hands sometimes blow up, you know."

"I know, sir, but even the heavy green blinds are tacked down all around the window casings. We hear queer music coming from that room at midnight sometimes; it is a weird, oriental *tum tum* that makes one shiver. I've heard that the first Mrs. Norman was very fond of that kind of music. That used to be her boudoir; it was furnished like a queen's palace."

"That likely accounts for its being closed. He can't bear the old associations. It probably makes him think of his former wife's tragic death."

The old man wagged his head sagely.

"That may be so, but it doesn't account for all those queer noises we hear coming from there almost every night. You see the servants' quarters are just over that room. The few old ones are used to it now, but the younger ones don't stay long."

Doctor Wayland threw away his cigar.

"Well, uncle, I think we have gossiped long enough this morning, but I suppose everybody enjoys a mystery. I must get back to my patient."

He went directly to Anne's room and dismissed the nurse.

"OH, King, you have a plan?" she asked eagerly, her eyes all excitement and her hands working nervously.

He turned upon her, again the stern physician.

"If you are going to be hysterical, I'm through. You can help me by being calm and brave."

She quieted immediately and held out her hand beseechingly.

"Oh, I will be, I will be. You mustn't desert me now, King."

He took her hand and gave it a quiet pressure; in his eyes was a look so vivid, so intense, that it almost startled her. He opened his lips as if to speak and then closed them abruptly. He turned as if to go, but the woman held tightly to the hand that would have released her.

"King," she whispered, "tell me, do you know—have you seen—yet?"

He looked deep into her eyes for a long moment; finally he spoke, his voice hoarse with emotion:

"Anne, if that wing should burn to the ground and everything in it turned to ashes, could you go back to your husband's arms and still love him?"

She put up her arms as if to ward off a blow, and, sinking back, she buried her face in one of the soft silken cushions. She lay silent while the man bent over her, his face working with emotion.

"Tell me," he demanded sternly, "if I swear to you that you are simply the victim of an overwrought imagination, that you are suffering from hallucination, that as God and man are my judges, there is not an atom of truth or reality in your story—will you go back to your husband's arms?"

He placed his hand upon her shoulder, and shook her almost brutally.

She raised her head and looked straight into the burning eyes before her.

"No, never. Why torment me with such nonsense? I know what I saw. Nothing in the world can ever change that. What is more, I will leave this house when you do if I have to be carried on a stretcher."

"Anne, do you mean that? You mean that you will not go on here, regardless of amends that are made?"

"I do," she answered steadily.

"Suppose I put Dick in an asylum if it should be true? Mind you, I'm not conceding that it is."

Her face blanched, and her lips trembled as she answered.

"Oh, no, no, not that, King. I couldn't bear that."

"You still love him?"

She shook her head slowly.

"No, I'm afraid I almost hate him for what he has done."

"If you are going to leave him, why not let him go on in his idiotic dreams?"

"No! All evidence must be destroyed. It is bound to come to light sometime if it goes on, and then all the world will give one little shiver of honor and go on pitying me and laughing at me forever. Oh, I couldn't bear that!"

He looked at her silently for a moment, and then wheeled suddenly toward the door. Going to the study, he called Norman at the city club.

"She is very calm today, Norman, her only fear seems to be that you will come home tonight and come to her room. I have assured her that you will not, and I think it would be best for you to remain in town and come out in the morning. I will be ready to talk to you then."

After a slight hesitancy Norman agreed. Doctor Wayland hung up the receiver with a sigh of relief.

During that day and far into the night he made many quiet pilgrimages about the house and grounds, only to return to his room in the wee, small hours tired and disheartened. He dropped wearily into a chair. A little later he rose excitedly and began to pace the floor. Abruptly stopping before a wall mirror in one end of the room he gazed sternly at the image reflected, muttering to himself:

"What an old fool you have been to think you could turn burglar, safe-blower, or whatnot, to get into that infernal room. King, old man, there is only one honorable way to do it, and you have the right in your capacity as physician to do that. It is going to be done in the morning."

WITH a long drawn sigh of relief, he lay down to snatch a few hours of much needed rest. After breakfast the next morning he looked in on Anne, and then went directly to the study. To his surprise he found Dick already there, just removing his gloves.

"Hello, King. How's Anne?" he asked eagerly.

"As well as can be expected, Dick. You are early." Noting the other's haggard looks, he added, "You don't look very fit yourself."

"No. I feel a trifle seedy, but it doesn't make much difference about me. Have you anything to tell me about Anne?"

"Yes, but first of all, Norman, I have a few things to ask you. Will you please see that we are not disturbed for a short time?"

Norman looked up quickly. Something in the other's face seemed to hold him spellbound for an instant; then he crossed the room, closed the door, and locked it. Coming back, he stood with his back to the great fireplace. Wayland suddenly leaned across the back of the massive leather chair that stood between them, his eyes glowing with an unnatural light as they seemed to bore into the very soul of the man before him. Then, with upraised finger, he demanded:

"Norman, tell me, man to man—what have you locked in that wing chamber?"

A change so sudden, so swift, came over the man under the accusing finger that it almost startled the accusor. Norman's face changed from a healthy glow to a sickly pallor, his eyes protruded, and his jaw dropped.

Wayland stepped quickly around the chair that separated them. Grasping the other's shoulder with an iron grip, he shook him roughly. Then, with that accusing finger close to the livid face, every word coming like the rip of a saw, he almost shouted:

"Answer me this: What woman wouldn't have lost her mind, or have gone raving mad, when she learned that the husband she loved and respected had enthroned within a gorgeous room the skeleton of his former wife? That the love and caresses that should have been her right were bestowed upon this hideous thing; that the jewels she should have worn were hung about that gruesome neck; that the beautiful gowns that should have been hers were hung upon those rattling bones—God, man! is it any wonder that she goes raving mad at the sight of you, when you dare to come to her after spending hours with that thing of horror? When she knows this, is it any wonder that she acts like a mad woman at the sight of you?"

The man in his grasp had grown limp and had fallen to his knees. The hot stinging words of his one-time friend had rushed upon him like a simoon. There was no thought of denial within him. He merely groveled at the feet of the stronger man until Wayland raised him and thrust him into the big chair. For a moment he sat like one in a stupor; then, opening his eyes like one awakening from a deep sleep, he at last made an attempt to regain his poise.

"You—you gave me quite a fright, Wayland. What are you talking about? Have *you* gone mad?"

Wayland laughed—a laugh that was not pleasant to hear.

"All right, Norman; if I am not right, of course you will take me into that room and show me what is in there."

"Why, yes, of course I will—some day. But right now I haven't the combination. I'll get it out of my vault tomorrow."

"Oh, no, you won't, Norman. You have it right here." He touched his forehead lightly. "Don't lie to me. It only makes matters worse. You may as well take me in there now and confide in me. I'll do my best to help you. If you don't, I shall lose no time in having you committed to an asylum."

Norman bounded to his feet, his strength returning with the horror that came over him.

"For God's sake, no! Anything but that, Wayland. Oh, you don't understand. You can't understand. I'm not insane—I—oh—you—you—don't know what you are saying. You can't force me there. I have money—I—"

"Yes, you have money," the other interrupted stonily, "but this is one time your money won't buy a way out."

For a moment Norman stared unbelieving; then, like a man shaking with the palsy, he took a few steps towards the door behind the bookcase, and, raising a shaking hand, he motioned the doctor to follow. Before he stooped to work the combination, he spoke again haltingly.

"You won't tell what you see in this room, King, for old times' sake—for Anne's sake."

"I promise, but of course there will be conditions."

Norman bowed submissively; he knew that worse than death awaited him if he did not do as this man bid him. He fumbled the combination. After a second attempt the massive door swung wide, and Wayland pushed the man before him. He had no intention of being caught in any kind of trap.

"SWITCH on the lights," he commanded.

Norman complied, but instead of the brilliant lighting Wayland had expected there was only a warm red glow that came from colored globes at both ends of the room. It took him some time to accustom his eyes to the change, but when he was able to see clearly, he was surprised at the change that had taken place in the man before him. He had seemingly forgotten the doctor's presence and stood with outstretched arms before the massive white and gold bed.

"Camille, my darling, I'm here."

For a full moment he stood so; then, stooping, he gathered into his arms a thing of rattling bones clothed in the finest of lace-trimmed and silken *lingerie*. Long flowing sleeves fell from the dangling arms.

Wayland crept closer, unseen. He noted that the bones were threaded together with tiny silver links. Upon the head was a wig of golden curls held in place by a costly boudoir cap.

Norman raised it tenderly in his arms and placed it in a huge arm-chair which stood under a rose-shaded lamp in the center of the room.

"Dearest, don't blame me for staying away last night," he murmured. "See what I have brought you?"

He drew from his pocket a tiny leather case and took from it a ring set with a single pearl. He slipped it on the grue-

some hand and proceeded to tie it in place with a piece of ribbon as one ties a ring upon a baby's finger.

"Pearls stand for tears, dear heart," he went on in that low monotone, "the tears I wept last night because I could not be with you."

Wayland drew still closer. The fingers were covered with precious gems, some of them worth thousands. There was one gorgeous diamond weighing at least three karats. Around the neck was a great string of emerald beads, a rope of pearls, and a diamond pendant.

"Now, which gown tonight, Camille?"

Suddenly Wayland drew himself up rigidly, cold beads of perspiration breaking out upon his brow. Was he, too, succumbing to some weird spell? Did he hear some sepulchral voice calling: "King! King!"

As if in answer to his silent, startled question, Norman turned toward him for the first time.

"Yes, we have a guest tonight. You must look your best."

Norman crossed the room to a great built-in wardrobe and swung the door wide open. Inside hung row after row of wonderful gowns of all descriptions. Wayland sank weakly into a nearby chair. Glancing about the room, he saw that it was lavishly furnished, but over all was an accumulation of dust untouched for years. The air was close and stagnant.

He watched the man clothe the rattling bones in a gorgeous dinner gown of black lace and old rose satin, crooning all the while as if he were dressing a beloved child. Then, as he watched, he saw Norman turn and start a phonograph which stood near. Immediately the muffled tones of a weird oriental dance filled the room.

"Will you dance tonight? No? Well, then, we will sit and visit."

For an hour Norman talked. The scene was getting on Wayland's nerves, and he determined to put an end to it in some way. He was stifled. He had seen enough.

Approaching Norman softly, he put a hand upon his shoulder.

"Come, old man, let's go."

Norman raised his head and looked at him in a dazed, uncertain way; then, as if the sight of him brought back other memories, he started to his feet and looked about with wild, dilating eyes which roved from Wayland to the grinning thing in the chair, so grotesque in all its finery. Then he fell on his knees and began crying softly.

"King! King! Can't you see?" he murmured brokenly. "Can't you see the beautiful image of Camille sitting there? Oh, you do see more than that framework of bones, don't you? That is merely the house in which her beautiful spirit dwells. I'm not crazy, man! She is as real to me today as when she was with me in the flesh."

THE doctor stooped and lifted the swaying man to his feet. In spite of all, he was touched.

"Why couldn't you have been content with her spirit, Dick? Why didn't you place Camille's remains in an honored grave instead of bringing them home like this?"

"I couldn't, King. The very night that I was notified that the bones had been found, she came to me in the spirit form and pledged me to do what I have done. She was jealous of Anne and bade me keep her frame to deck with jewels and finery, demanding that I buy for her two of everything to Anne's one. I've been in bondage all these years, but I do love her. I was driven almost mad when I lost her."

Wayland could not help turning his head away in disgust.

"You were not long getting over it," he remarked dryly.

Norman looked up quickly.

"I know you have always hated me for taking Anne. But, King, I have always been good to her outside of this. How did she find it out? I can't understand."

"I am not at liberty to tell you," Wayland answered. "Now let's get out of here. It's a foul atmosphere."

He took Norman firmly by the arm, and led him from the room, banging the door upon the horrors within. He was too much shaken himself to speak for a few minutes, and then he burst out almost savagely:

"Norman, I demand that you bury that thing in there at once. I don't want any publicity about this; I will arrange with an undertaker that I can trust to come and get it in the night. Then all of those things in there must be burned or otherwise destroyed and the room thrown open, or perhaps the wing torn down altogether. Will you agree to this?"

The face of the man before him turned ashen, and his lips trembled as he spoke.

"You—you are asking too much. I—I can't do it."

He buried his face in his hands.

Wayland's face grew stern.

"Very well, Norman. I have already told you the alternative."

"You—you mean the asylum?"

"I do."

There was the silence of death in the room for a moment; then Norman raised bloodshot eyes to the grave face above him.

"Please, King, leave me alone for awhile. I will give you my word by noon. Meet me here."

Wayland nodded a silent consent and, without further words, passed out of the room. Although outwardly calm, he was mentally in a tumult of unrest. It was a difficult situation to handle alone, but he could not lay it bare to the prying eyes of strangers. For the sake of his old friendship for Dick, for the sake of his love for Anne, he must deal with it to the best of his ability.

Three hours later, as the clock in the hall struck the hour of twelve, he again knocked at the study door. No voice bade him enter, so he pushed it open and went in. The room was deserted.

He found the door to the mystery chamber standing ajar, but all was silence and darkness within. He called softly, but there was no answer. Stepping inside, with hands that trembled he felt for the switch where he had seen Dick reach for it. After a few seconds he found it and flooded the place with that weird light that had almost unnerved him before. Was he mistaken, or were his eyes, not used to the red glow, playing him tricks? For a moment he stood transfixed. A white shadowy presence seemed to hang over the chair in which he had last seen the skeleton reposing. Then the white mist disappeared, and he made out the kneeling form of Dick Norman, his arms wrapped about the grinning thing so gorgeously attired in fine raiment. His head lay against the bony breast and within the circle of those long dangling arms swathed in their flowing sleeves.

With a smothered cry of horror, Wayland hurried forward. Then he drew back in sheer amazement, for instead of that horrible thing of rattling bones, he seemed to see the beautiful face and form of Camille West as he remembered her years ago. Was he, too, going mad along with Dick Norman? He rubbed his eyes as a child might on awakening from a deep slumber. Reaching down, he shook his friend with none too steady hands. A dull thud on the floor answered him, and he saw he had shaken a revolver from the other's hand.

At once his strength came back. He was once more the dignified professional man.

One touch of the icy fingers—he hastily felt for Norman's heart. Pulling the fast stiffening form backward, he searched feverishly for the bullet wound,

(Continued on page 84)

The Remarkable Tale of a "Haunted Violin"

The Phantom Violinist

By WALTER F. McCANLESS

VERY few of us, I suppose, have not been enthralled by tales from *Arabian Nights*, or thrilled to the goose-flesh state by stories of "ha'nts," as told by the old-fashioned southern Mammy.

To me the sole merit of those old mystery or ghost stories lies in the fact that nowhere within them is the reader or hearer made to feel that a hoax has been perpetrated upon him. They are honest-to-goodness ghost stories and are not cluttered up at the close with weakening explanations that the conventional stories of that type have.

At the risk of being regarded unconventional, therefore, I wish to assure you that I have no explanation of the tale I am going to tell. I give it exactly as I got it from the lips of one of the principal actors. It may be that, in this day of psychic research, some explanation has been discovered, but, I repeat, I have none.

Late one night in February, 1920, I was called up by the night editor of the little paper, for which I was acting in the humble capacity of reporter, to investigate a strange occurrence that had taken place at the Auditorium earlier in the evening.

From those whom I interviewed I learned that the entertainment was composed of several numbers by a rising young violinist, touring the state as a member of a prominent Lyceum. Nothing out of the ordinary happened during the first part of his program, the young violinist responding to the usual encores in the customary manner of artists.

But after the following interval, which was prolonged, owing to the shifting of the audience and late arrivals, he came upon the stage in a noticeably constrained manner. His accompanist played the opening bar, paused, looked over his shoulder, and began again. Still the violinist did not move, and the audience suffered all the pains of witnessing a case of stage-fright. Again the opening bar was played, and again the pause.

Then the violinist began, but not the air familiar to the accompanist; for, after a few feeble efforts to follow, he soon desisted, while seemingly from the soul of the violin there throbbed into the ears of the audience a low haunting melody. Slowly, at first, and in mournful cadence the violin sobbed out a tale of loneliness.

To the audience, frozen in their seats, it ceased to be a thing of wood and strings. It was an immortal soul finding at last a sympathetic ear. More and more rapid became the measure as, from loneliness, the tale progressed to one of privation and suffering—suffering, growing ever more and more acute and mingling with despair. Abruptly, then, from the wail of despair, which sank fitfully lower and lower, the air changed to a soft pizzicati, as from spiritland.

All space seemed filled with airy creatures that flitted and danced, mowed and gibbered, beckoned and menaced till the blood ran cold. Again the air changed. Low and weird, it rose in ever increasing crescendo till, with the dread certainty of the *Dies Irae*, it broke in one awful shriek. As if in echo to the voice of the violin, right in the midst of the audience, an answering shriek rang out. Many in the audience sprang to their feet, but were almost instantly calmed by the raised hand of the violinist, who had come to the front of the stage. Pointing his finger at the trembling culprit, who had not resumed his seat, he said:

"Gentlemen, there stands the murderer of Joel Dalziel. Take him!"

THIS was the strange occurrence regarding which I was charged to secure an interview from the violinist. Consequently, not more than a quarter of an hour after I was called, I was shown into the private sitting-room of the artist.

He did not keep me waiting and soon appeared habited as on the stage except for lounging-robe and bedroom slippers. I rose with an apology for the call at so late an hour, but he raised his hand deprecatingly.

"Naturally I could not sleep, under the circumstances," he said, "and I'd as soon talk. I presume you came regarding the affair at the Auditorium, Mr.—er—" (Here he referred to my card.)

"Wright." We said it together.

"Yes," I continued, "the people will want to know all about it. I presume you know the man made a confession of the crime?"

"No, I came directly to my rooms, since I had been under a great strain, and heard nothing. But, of course, his guilty actions were, in themselves, a confession. It was but another case of 'the cranes of Ibycus'."

"I understand that your wonderful improvisation brought it about. The public would like to have an explanation of that."

The violinist smiled, and, selecting a cigarette for himself, he pushed the pack across the table to me. Settling himself comfortably in his chair, he told me the following tale which I now give to the public for the first time:

"You have asked me to explain how my improvisation, as you call it, brought about a confession of murder. In the first place, I am not sure that I have an explanation to offer—not, at any rate, one to satisfy you or that you would care to give to the public—but it is all I have to offer. In the second place, the explanation, such as it is, will have to be in the form of a story. But before I begin it, I myself have one or two confessions to make. First, my real name is Joel Dalziel. I know what you are thinking; but the murdered man was my uncle after whom I was named. Second, what you were pleased to call my improvisation is not mine but my uncle's, and never in my life have I heard all of it till tonight.

"Strange, you think? Stranger still, if you know that not I, but the Phantom Violinist—*played that last number!* But to my story:

"As you probably have already surmised, I come from a musical family. Not only my uncle, but my grandfather and great-grandfather, were all violinists of no small fame. In fact, it is known in our family that wherever there was a Dalziel, however remote the kinship, there would be found a violin. I

have known members of my family to prove their right to the name by being able to play the violin.

"My uncle was a maker of violins as well as a composer. Such was his skill in this direction that he acquired a good bit of property before he finally disappeared. I was but a child at the time, and can just remember his habit of taking his violin with him to the forests where, in a sort of outdoor laboratory, he would study and test the acoustic properties of different woods. From the last expedition of this kind he never returned.

"At the age of ten I received an invitation to visit my grandfather at his estate, 'Lion's Lair'—so named on account of two large stone lions that marked the entrance to the house. I knew not, at the time, why the invitation was extended to me alone, but I was got ready, and I hastened to visit the old man.

"Perhaps his increased loneliness, since the disappearance of Uncle Joel, made him wish to have the namesake, who so strongly resembled his son, near. Anyway, after a long journey, tiresome for its monotony of scenery and method of travel, I arrived at 'The House of the Lions,' as it was sometimes called.

"I will not bore you with a description of the magnificent situation of this old house, nor how for miles, before it is reached over undulating hills, its great white columns and broad red roof appear against its mountain background as some classic structure of ancient time. But I will tell you that, casting my glance back and down over the broad sweep of hill and valley and woodland with the shadows of sunset creeping across them, I was impressed with its utter loneliness and comparative isolation.

"Grandfather himself met me—not in his bluff hearty manner of my earlier memories, but in a sort of timid abstracted manner. Young as I was, I noted the change, suspected the cause, and forbore comments that would hurt and questions that would reopen old wounds. I suspected, though I never knew otherwise till later on in my visit, that he had never learned the fate of my uncle. Otherwise, my grandfather bore few outward marks of his grief.

"Not to burden my story with irrelevant details, I was assigned a room that had been Uncle Joel's, and soon the days began to pass in a manner befitting the association of age and childhood—my grandfather reading, day-dreaming, or telling me stories in my quieter moments, and I in exploring the grounds or listening to his stories. No other associates we had except a man-of-all-work and his wife, who was my grandfather's housekeeper.

"These, however did not count, as they seemed to have been trained to respect Grandfather's grief and to hold themselves aloof. Questions I had in plenty, for in my explorations about the grounds I had discovered in the family burying-plot a grave more newly made than the others and a fairly worn trail that led back further into the mountain.

"But I restrained my curiosity for the reason I have already given and for the reason that Grandfather had the air of one whose confidence would be hard to force."

"TOWARD the close of my visit, however, the even tenor of our way began to change. Grandfather had become more and more restless, walking up and down the long porch or about the grounds, or gazing up into the mountain.

"I, on the other hand, had found other fields to explore and now daily amused myself by rummaging among the odd pieces of old furniture, books, arms of the Revolution, and clothing that I had found in the great old garret. There was one old chest, however, that had thus far resisted my efforts to open. It was a quaint, oddly-carved chest that reminded me of some of the stories Grandfather had told me. Visions of treasures passed before my mental sight, and I at once determined to ask Grandfather for the key or the secret or whatever it was that opened it. I rushed down and found Grandfather pacing restlessly up and down the porch.

"'Grandfather,' I began, 'that old carved chest in the garret—'

"I stopped, transfixed by the look in his eyes and by the grip upon my arm.

"'Joel;' he gasped out at length in a horrified whisper, 'did you—have you—what have you done?'

"I was badly frightened at his manner.

"'Joel, what have you done?' he repeated, giving me a shake.

"'N-nothing; I only wanted the key.'

"His fierce grip upon my arm relaxed and fell away.

"'You did not find it, then—the spring, I mean?' he asked more calmly, even kindly, as he realized something of my fright.

"'No, sir. Won't you open it for me?' I added, encouraged by his kinder tone.

"'Joel;' He almost shrieked this, and his face went white. 'No—never! I could not! And yet—' He paused, irresolute, as he struggled for control. 'And yet it may be merely my fancy after all. Yes, that is surely it. How could the dead—' Here his voice fell in incoherent soliloquy and finally ceased altogether, while his head gradually sank in thought.

"'Yes,' he continued, after a moment, as to himself, 'I will—I will. This horror—from the mountain—if I can prove—my fancy—I will. Come!' He turned suddenly to me. 'I will open it for you and let you know something of what I have lived in the past three years. Come!' He turned resolutely toward the garret and I dared not disobey.

"We were soon by the chest, and I can see him yet as, with pale face and trembling hand, he touched the spring. The lid rose slowly as if loath to give up its secret. Forgetting my momentary fright, I hastened forward with the eagerness and ignorance of youth.

"'Listen! Do you not hear it?' he asked.

"'I hear nothing, Grandfather.'

"My eyes were bent upon a small coffin-shaped box in the chest. A groan behind me drew my attention to Grandfather. He, too, was looking at that box, and the terrible appearance of his face I shall never forget as long as I live.

"Pale before, his face was now as the face of a corpse—a greenish pale. The veins were swollen like cords under the skin upon his forehead, perspiration was on his brow, his breath came in gurgling gasps, and his eyes were so distended as to seem bursting from their sockets. If I have ever seen a madman under the throes of a horrible hallucination, I saw one then. With a shriek of terror, I jumped from the chest and dashed toward the head of the stairs.

"'Joel, stop!' came in a ghostly voice from Grandfather.

"In spite of my terror, I paused long enough to glance over my shoulder at Grandfather. He calmed himself with an effort and, shudderingly picking up the box, followed me. I hastened down, feeling that I was followed by something unearthly—a gruesome Thing.

"At the bottom of the steps Grandfather led the way into the library and, placing the box upon the table, he motioned me to a chair.

"'You remember your Uncle Joel, do you not?' he asked.

"I nodded.

"'You have wondered, perhaps, why I, an old man with nothing in common with your youth, should have invited you here to this lonely spot. Perhaps you thought that, with your Uncle Joel gone, I was lonely and wished you to

cheer my old days. Anyway, you came, a fact that I appreciate, and you forebore to ask questions; and I understood your tact in avoiding reminding me of my loss. But the fact is, I had you here not for my loneliness, although I am lonely, and my loss is rarely out of my mind. I had you here to measure myself by you, for I have had fears that I am going mad. This violin is your Uncle Joel's, and that newly-made grave out yonder I believe to be his.'

"Grandfather paused as if uncertain how to proceed further. Had Uncle Joel come home but to die, then? Or had they found his body? I wondered. When on the point of giving way to these questions, I had them answered in the story which my grandfather again resumed.

" 'You possibly remember,' he continued, 'that at the time of Joel's disappearance diligent search was made in his accustomed haunts and in the surrounding neighborhood, but without result. We looked for a mangled or wounded body out in the open; we never looked for a prisoner under lock and key. Even if it had occurred to us, who of our neighbors—and they were few—would be guilty of abducting him? He had property, but how could his abductors hope to profit by it with him a prisoner?

" 'But all of this never occurred to us till too late. Months passed by, months in which he suffered all the torture of the damned, and we were beginning to hope that he, if he had merely gone off, would soon return. I nearly go mad when I think that he was almost at our doors—right up on that mountain in a cabin—*starving!*'

"Here the recital proved too much for my grandfather, and he was obliged to pause. My heart went out to the old man, for he seemed so broken and helpless, and, under the influence of the stress of the emotions of the past few moments, he appeared to age perceptibly. I opened my mouth to protest against a further recital when, after a desperate effort at control, he continued:

" 'One day, while restlessly riding about, I passed the cabin and noted the heavy door and the heavy iron bars across the windows. I had heard that the building had been used as a prison during the Revolutionary War. It was an old building, but remarkably well preserved, and seemed capable even then of holding prisoners.

" 'Idly I rode up to the window and looked in. I was on the point of turning away, when, in the shadow near the door, I caught a glimpse of what appeared to be old clothes. It occurred to me that they might be the clothes of a Revolutionary prisoner. Curiosity carried me around to the door, which I found to be locked on the outside with padlock and chain. The chain proved to be rust-eaten and so worn that by a little effort with a stick I broke it and entered.

" 'You can imagine my horror and loathing when I discovered that the clothes covered a skeleton. Something strangely familiar about the clothes caused me to turn the skeleton over, when, from the coat and the fleshless arms, there rolled—*this violin!* Instantly I thought of Joel. I know not why, but it is a fact. With fingers trembling from half-formed fears, I opened the case. Before me lay my son's violin, and I knew no more.

" 'WHEN I finally regained consciousness the sun was setting and my horse was snorting with fright at the open door. I tarried long enough to compose what was left of my poor son's body, intending to return that night and to convey it to our family burying-ground for interment. While engaged in this sad duty, I observed for the first time that the skeleton was not an old one, for parts of the flesh still adhered to the bone in places. But my heart broke when I found a half masticated piece of leather between the poor jaws!'

"Again Grandfather paused, overcome, and I begged him to desist from so painful a recital. He shook his head.

" 'The rest is soon told. I will finish, for you must know all. I returned that night, as intended, and with help performed the last sad rites for my boy. The violin I placed in the corner there by the bookcase, later moving it to where you found it.

" 'Late one night, after a dismal day of rain and sleet, I was trying to read when a spell of restlessness assailed me. It was such a night as made one wish to nestle in a cozy chair close up to a roaring fire to read. My mind constantly reverted to Joel and his sad fate. Finally I gave up the attempt and laid the book upon the table, intending to let the sound of the wind and rain lull me into forgetfulness and sleep. The wind had risen considerably and was moaning and whimpering about the eaves, and at every sudden gust the rain and sleet would beat like ghostly fingertips upon the window-pane.

" 'Realizing that my efforts were useless, I rose and carried the book I had been trying to read back to the case. Idly, my glance fell upon the violin and it suddenly occurred to me that I had not closely examined it since I found it. I wondered if it were in good repair after months of exposure in a poor cabin in all sorts of weather. With this in mind, I opened the case and took the violin out. The strings were all broken, but the violin had not suffered—a fact due to the coat and protecting arms of my poor boy.

" 'I soon had it restrung and was preparing to draw the bow across the strings when I heard a low sweet medoly that I recognized as an improvisation of Joel's. It appeared to come from his room. Hardly knowing what I dared to hope, I rushed madly into his room. Had Joel after all these months, come back? His room was as empty as it had been for months. But the melody continued, now in another part of the house. Again I rushed after it, but with like result. Will-o'the-wisplike, it appeared to be leading me! Leading me where?

" 'I rushed back into the library and placed the violin in the case. I intended to follow that melody, which now seemed to be coming from afar. Out on the porch I ran, heedless now of rain or sleet. Could it, after all, have been the wind? Was it my fancy? But no; down the wind, as if borne by it, came the melody, leading me—*leading me to the mountain!*

" 'I followed. Through the storm I followed. Up the mountain, to the cabin, and beyond I followed—followed till the storm broke and the dawn appeared. Exhausted and fainting, I fell; and there, several hours later, the searching party found me muttering and groping in delirium. They carried me home, and for a month or more I lay between life and death.

" 'When I recovered, the people around looked at me pityingly. I knew they believed me mad! Am I? I can still reason. Is not my story coherent? Or do I merely have seasons of madness? I have begun to have fears, for at times I still hear that melody and I always follow. For three years now this has continued until I have worn a trail up the mountain. I never know what I hope to find—Joel or his murderer. I cannot believe that Joel, after all these years, still lives. And yet hope dies hard, they say. If he does live, whose skeleton is that?

" 'And now you know all. I wanted you here to see if you, too, could hear The Phantom Violinist, as I have begun to call him. But my fears seem to grow. The Phantom Violinist played today—*and you did not hear!*'

"SO ended my grandfather's story, and you may guess that, young as I was, I grasped what his closing words

meant. Grandfather mad! With growing horror, as bit by bit I recalled what I had heretofore only subconsciously noted (his abstracted gaze, his listening attitude), I came to a full realization of the fact. I was relieved, therefore, when a day or two later I was called home.

"Grandfather insisted that I carry the violin with me, and for fear of hurting him I complied. As I turned to look back upon the 'House of the Lions' I then swore that if ever I had the means I should hunt down Uncle Joel's murderer and exact payment to the full for the life he had taken and for the reason he had overthrown. I little dreamed I was so soon to be successful.

"The days went by uneventfully enough for my youth. A month passed, and with it passed my poor grandfather. He had taken the trail up the mountain and, in his weakened state, fell from a high rock. When they found him he was quite dead. I renewed my oath of vengeance, and, taking out the violin for the first time since I had acquired it, I examined the seeming source of Grandfather's tragic fate. I could play a little by ear even then, and an overmastering desire came to me to play Uncle Joel's violin.

"I strung it and tuned it and picked up the bow to play. But I never played it. A low sweet melody began to throb from the heart of the violin. Surprised and charmed, I stood for several minutes before I realized what was happening. When I did, in horror I almost flung the violin from me into its case. The melody died away in a wail of despair. Was I, too, going mad?

"Looking down in terror upon the instrument as this idea came to me, I beheld sticking through one of the *f* holes a yellow piece of paper which my hasty action had dislodged. Without touching the violin, I fished out a discolored piece of envelope that had evidently been secreted within it years before. Unfolding it, I discovered that it contained writing that was fairly legible.

> *"'To the owner of this violin' [it ran] 'I, Joel Dalziel, dying of slow starvation, do give and bequeath all my estate, lately converted into stocks and bonds, to the amount of* ($150,000) *One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars, on condition that half of said amount be used in a musical education, the other half to be used in finding and prosecuting my incarcerators, who are now my murderers, described below.'*

"The envelope was pretty well covered, both inside and out, with a small closely-written hand which was easily proved beyond doubt to be my uncle's. Furthermore, details as to where certain bonds were placed, facts known only to my uncle, proved conclusively enough that the paper was genuine and I had no difficulty in establishing my claim. For the past ten years I have been carrying out the conditions of my uncle's strange will.

"Strange that after all these years of search in my travels I should succeed in so odd a manner in running to earth the murderer. I had not used that violin for years, and only because my regular violin failed to come with my other things was I compelled to use my uncle's."

"ONE thing more," I said, after the completion of this marvelous tale. "How do you explain the awkward pause just before your last number?"

"Do you know," he laughed, "I clear forgot what I was going to play? Yes, sir. I couldn't recall a note or how to finger it. I could only hear the haunting melody of my uncle's, and my old fear that I was going mad came back. I was conscious of nothing but the haunting melody till that terrible cry from the audience."

"The man, in his confession, stated that the melody was the same that had drawn him repeatedly to the scene of his crime," I ventured.

"Doubtless at the same times my grandfather heard it," he said.

"Then there is your remarkable likeness to your uncle," I added.

The violinist smiled.

"But, while he may have taken me for a ghost," he said, "there is The Phantom Violinist. It is all very strange. Can you explain it?"

I could not, and today I am no nearer its solution.

Girl, Gypsy All Her Life, Turns from Wilds

FRESH from the gypsy world, slim yet sinewy, brown as a berry, with oval face and slender shapely nose, with firm lips and luminous brown eyes, and with hair glistening in two braids that hung to the waist, Rosalia Bimbo strode into a Chicago court and announced that she wished to see Assistant State's Attorney William J. Grace. She had fled from wild gypsy life because she was weary of lying, stealing and telling fortunes. As far back as she could remember, the gypsies with whom she had been forced to travel had craftily schooled her in the devious ways of petty crime.

Drilled in the profession of picking pockets and telling persons things that were not true, she finally summoned courage to flee from the endless round of dusty, dirty travel in the old Packard motor car in which a thirteen-numbered band ranged over the United States and even into foreign countries insidiously filching sustenance in any available field. Rosalia had been told she was born in Africa, and other things she was afraid were not true, and now appealed to William Grace to give her a chance to realize a dream to enter better ways.

The wish was granted; before night her cherished dream had been realized, she was able to sit before a white-clothed table, eat with silverware, sleep in a clean-linened, snowy bed and thus begin a life sought for in her eighteen years of yoked youth.

Gas Bombs to Check Forest Fires

THE devastation wrought by the Riviera forest fires has inspired French scientists to take a hand in checking this menace to its beautiful wooded districts.

Eugene Turpin, inventor of turpenite, the deadliest gas used in the world war, has submitted a list of chemicals to the ministry of war and agriculture, for fighting forest fires from aeroplanes.

The type of bomb which will probably be the most effective will contain tubes of sulphuric acid and liquefied ammonia. Bombs of this kind will be dropped by 'planes flying over the burning areas. When they explode the resulting fumes will spread over large spaces, extinguishing the flames.

It is expected that this invention will act as a potent check on any future forest fires which may occur in France.

Here's an Eerie Yarn with a Smashing Climax

LUCIFER

By JOHN D. SWAIN

THE notorious *Remsen Case* was table talk a year or so ago, although few today could quote the details offhand. Because of it, half a dozen men were discussing psychic trivialities, in a more or less desultory way. Bliven, the psychoanalyst, was speaking.

"It all hinges on a tendency which is perhaps best expressed in such old saws as: 'Drowning men clutch at straws,' 'Any port in a storm,' or, 'A gambling chance.'

"When men have exhausted science and religion, they turn to mediums, and crystal-gazers, and clairvoyants, and patent medicines. I knew an intelligent pharmacist who was dying of a malignant disease. Operated on three times. Specialists had given him up. Then he began to take the nostrums and cure-alls on his own shelves, although he knew perfectly well what they contained—or could easily enough have found out. Consulted a lot of herb doctors, and long-haired Indian healers, and advertising specialists."

"And, of course, without result," commented the little English doctor.

"I wouldn't say that," said Bliven. "It kept alive the forlorn spark of hope in his soul. Better than merely folding his hands and waiting for the inevitable! He was just starting in with a miraculous Brazilian root, when he snuffed out. On the whole, he lived happier, and quite possibly longer, because of all the fake remedies and doctors he spent so much money on. It's all in your own mind, you know. Nothing else counts much."

"All fakes, including the records of the P. S. R.," nodded Holmes, who lectured on experimental psychology.

The little doctor shook his head deprecatingly.

"I shouldn't go as far as that, really," he objected; "because, every now and then, in the midst of their conscious faking, as you call it, with the marked cards and prepared slates, the hidden magnets and invisible wires and all, these mediums and pseudo-magicians come up against something that utterly baffles them. I have talked with a well-known prestidigitator who has a standing bet of a hundred guineas that he can duplicate the manifestations of any medium; and yet he states that every now and then he finds himself utterly baffled. He can fake the thing cleverly, you understand; but he cannot fathom the unknown forces back of it all. It is dangerous ground. It is sometimes blasphemy! It is blundering in where angels fear to tread."

"Piffle!" snorted Bliven. "The subconscious mind explains it all; and we have only skirted the edge of our subject. When we have mastered it, we shall do things right in the laboratory that will put every astrologer and palmist and tea-ground prophet out of business."

Nobody seemed to have anything to answer, and the psychoanalyst turned to the little doctor.

"You know this, Royce," he asserted, a bit defiantly.

"I don't pretend to follow you new-era chaps as closely as I ought; but I recall an incident in my early practice that is not explicable in the present-day stage of your science, as I understand it."

Bliven grunted.

"Well—shoot!" he said. "Of course, we can't check up your facts, but if you were an accurate observer, we may be able to offer a plausible theory, at least."

Royce flushed at his brusque way of putting it, but took no offence. Everyone makes allowances for Bliven, who is a good fellow, but crudely sure of himself, and a slave to his hobby.

"IT happened a long, long time ago," began Royce; "when I was an interne in a London hospital. If you know anything about our hospitals, you will understand that they are about the last places on earth for anything bizarre to occur in. Everything is frightfully ethical, and prosy, and red-tapey—far more so than in institutions over here, better as these are in many ways.

"But almost anything can happen in London, and does. You love to point to New York as the typical *Cosmopolis*—because it has a larger Italian population than has Rome, a larger German than Berlin, a Jewish than Jerusalem, and so forth. Well, London has all this, and more. It has nuclei of Afghans, and Turkomans, and Arabs; it has neighborhoods where conversation is carried on in no known tongue. It even has a Synagogue of Negro Jews—dating certainly from the Plantagenet dynasty, and probably earlier.

"Myriads spend all their lives in London, and die knowing nothing about it. Sir Walter Besant devoted twenty years to the collecting of data for his history of the city, and confessed that he had only a smattering of his subject. Men learn some one of its hundred phases passing well; Scotland Yard agents, buyers of old pewter or black-letter books, tea importers, hotel keepers, solicitors, clubmen; but outside of their own little pool broods the eternal fog, hiding the real London in its sticky, yellow embrace. I was born there, attended its University, practiced for a couple of years in Whitechapel, and migrated to the fashionable Westminster district; but I visit the city as a stranger.

"So, if anything mysterious were to happen anywhere, it might well be in London; although, as I have said, one would hardly look for it in one of our solid, dull, intensely prosaic hospitals.

"Watts-Bedloe was the big man in my day. You will find his works in your medical libraries, Bliven; though I dare say he has been thrust aside by the onmarch of science. Osteopathy owes a deal to him, I think; and I know that Doctor Lorenz, the great orthoepedist of today, freely acknowledges his own debt.

"There was brought to us one day a peculiarly distressing case; the only child of Sir William Hutchison, a widower, whose hopes had almost idolatrously centered in this boy, who was a cripple. You would have to be British to understand just how Sir William felt. He was a keen sportsman; played all outdoor games superlatively well, rode to hounds over his own fields, shot tigers from an elephant's back in India, and on foot in Africa, rented a salmon stream in Norway, captained the All-English polo team for years, sailed his own yacht, bred his own hunters, had climbed all the more difficult Swiss peaks, and was

the first amateur to purchase and operate a biplane.

"So that to natural parental grief was added the bitter downfall of all the plans he had for this boy; instructing him in the fine art of fly-casting, straight shooting, hard riding, and all that sort of thing. Instead of a companion who could take up the life his advancing years were forcing him to relinquish, in a measure, he had a hopeless cripple to carry on, and end his line.

"He was a dear, patient little lad, with the most beautiful head, and great, intelligent eyes; but his wrecked little body was enough to wring your heart. Twisted, warped, shriveled—and far beyond the skill of Watts-Bedloe himself, who had been Sir William's last resort. When he sadly confessed that there was nothing he could do, that science and skillful nursing might add a few years to the mere existence of the little martyr, you will understand that his father came to that pass which you, Bliven, have illustrated in citing the case of the pharmacist. He was, in short, ready to try anything; to turn to quacks, necromancers, to Satan himself, if his son might be made whole!

"Oh, naturally he had sought the aid of religion. Noted clergy of his own faith had anointed the brave eyes, the patient lips, the crooked limbs, and prayed that God might work a miracle. But none was vouchsafed. I haven't the least idea who it was that suggested the *Luciferians* to Sir William."

"LUCIFERIANS? Devil worshipers?" interrupted Holmes. "Were there any of them in your time?"

"There are plenty of them today; but it is the most secret sect in the world. Huysmans in *La-Bas* has told us as much as has anyone; and you know perfectly well, or should, that all priests who believe in the Real Presence, take the utmost care that the sacred wafer does not pass into irresponsible hands. Many will not even place it on the communicant's palm; but only in his mouth. For the stolen Host is essential to the celebration of the infamous Black Mass which forms the chief ceremony of the Luciferian ritual. And every year a number of thefts, or attempted thefts, from the tabernaculum, are reported in the press.

"Now the theory of this strange sect is not without a certain distorted rationality. They argue that Lucifer, *Star of the Morning*, was cast out of Heaven after a great battle, in which he was defeated to be sure, but not destroyed, nor even crippled. Today, after centuries of missionary zeal, Christianity has gathered only a tithe of the people into its fold; the great majority is, and always has been, outside. The wicked flourish, often the righteous stumble; and at the last great battle of Armageddon, the Luciferians believe that their champion will finally triumph.

"Meanwhile, and in almost impenetrable secrecy, they practice their infamous rites and serve the devil, foregathering preferably in some abandoned church, which has an altar, and above it a crucifix, which they reverse. It is believed that they number hundreds of thousands, and flourish in every quarter of the world; and it is presumed that they employ grips and passwords. But amid so much that is conjecture, this fact stands clear; the cult of Lucifer does exist, and has from time immemorial.

"I never had the least idea who suggested them to Sir William. May have been some friend who was a secret devotee, and wished to make a proselyte. May have been an idle word overheard in a club—or a penny bus. The point is, he did hear, discovered that an occult power was claimed by their unholy priests, was ready to mortgage his estate or sell his soul for his little chap, and somehow got in touch with them.

"The fact that he managed it, that he browbeat Watts-Bedloe into permitting one of the fraternity to enter the hospital at all, is the best example I can give of his despairing persistence. At that, the physician agreed only upon certain seemingly prohibitive conditions. The fellow was not to touch the little patient, nor even to draw near his bed. He was not to speak to him, or seek to hold his gaze. No phony hypnotism, or anything like that.

"Watts-Bedloe, I think, framed the conditions in the confident hope that they would end negotiations; and he was profoundly disgusted when he learned that the Luciferian, though apathetic, was not in the least deterred by the hardness of the terms. It appeared that he had not been at all willing to come under any circumstances; that he tried persistently to learn how Sir William had heard of him, and his address, and that he had refused remuneration of any sort. Altogether, a new breed of fakir, you see!

"There were five of us in the room at the time appointed, besides the little patient, who was sleeping peacefully. Fact is, Watts-Bedloe had taken the precaution of administering a sleeping draught, in order that the quack might not in any possible way work upon his nervous system. Watts-Bedloe was standing by the cot, his sandy hair rumpled, his stiff moustache bristling, for all the world like an Airdale terrier on guard. The father was there, of course; and the head nurse, and a powerful and taciturn orderly. You can see that there wasn't much chance of the devil-man pulling off anything untoward!

"When, precisely on the moment, the door opened and he stood before us, I suffered as great a shock of surprise as ever in my life; and a rapid glance at my companions' faces showed me that their amazement equaled mine. I don't know just what type we had visualized—whether a white-bearded mystic clad in a long cloak with a peaked hat bearing cabalistic symbols, or a pale, sinister and debonair man of the world, such as George Arliss has given us, or what not; but certainly not the utterly insignificant creature who bowed awkwardly, and stood twirling a bowler hat in his hands as the door closed behind him.

"He was a little, plump, bald man of middle age, looking for all the world like an unsuccessful greengrocer, or a dealer in butter and cheese in a small way. Although the day was cool, with a damp yellow fog swirling over the city, he perspired freely, and continually wiped his brow with a cheap bandana. He seemed at once ill at ease, yet perfectly confident, if you know what I mean. I realize that it sounds like silly rot; but that is the only way I can describe him. Utterly certain that he could do that for which he had come, but very much wishing that he were anywhere else. I heard Watts-Bedloe mutter *'my word!'* And I believe he would have spat disgustedly—were such an act thinkable of a physician in a London hospital!

"The Luciferian priest turned to Sir William. When he spoke, it seemed entirely in keeping with his appearance that he should take liberties with his aspirates. 'I'm 'ere, m'lord. And h'at your service.'

"Watts-Bedloe spoke sharply. 'Look here, my man!' he said. 'Do you pretend to say that you can make this crippled child whole?'

"The strange man turned his moist, pasty face, livid in the fog murk, toward the specialist. 'E that I serves can, and will. I'm a middleman, in a manner of speaking. A transmitter. H'its easy enough for I'm, but I don't advise it, and I warns you I'm not to be 'eld responsible for 'ow 'E does it.'

"Watts-Bedloe turned to Sir William. 'Let's have an end to the sickening farce,' he said curtly. 'I need fresh air!'

"Sir William nodded to the little man, who mopped his brow with his bandana,

and pointed to the cot. 'Draw back the coverlet!' he commanded.

"The nurse obeyed, after a questioning glance at Watts-Bedloe. 'Tyke off 'is night gown,' continued the visitor.

"Watts-Bedloe's lips parted in a snarl at this, but Sir William arrested him with a gesture, stepped to his son's side, and with infinite gentleness took off the tiny gown, leaving the sleeping child naked in his bed.

"Again, as always, I felt a surge of pity sweep through me. The noble head, the pigeon breast, rising and falling softly now, the crooked spine, the little, gnarled, twisted limbs! But my attention was quickly drawn back to the strange man.

"Barely glancing at the child, he fumbled at his greasy waistcoat, Watts-Bedloe watching him meanwhile like a lynx, as he took out a crumb of chalk and, squatting down, drew a rude circle on the floor about him; a circle of possibly four feet in diameter. And within this circle he began laboriously to write certain words and figures."

"Hold on there!" spoke Bliven. "Certain words and figures? Just what symbols, please?"

"There was a swastika emblem," Royce promptly replied, "and others familiar to some of the older secret orders, and sometimes found on Aztec ruins and Babylonian brick tablets; the open eye, for instance, and a rude fist with thumb extended. Also he scrawled the sequence 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-9, the '8' omitted, you notice, which he multiplied by 18, and again by 27, and by 36; you can amuse yourselves working it out. The result is curious. Lastly, he wrote the sentence: *'Signa te, signa, temere me tangis et angis.'* A palindrome, you observe; that is, it reads equally well—or ill—backward or forward."

"Hocus pocus! Old stuff!" snorted Bliven.

Royce gazed mildly at him.

"Old stuff, as you say, professor. Older than recorded history. Having done this, a matter of five minutes, perhaps, with Watts-Bedloe becoming more and more restless, and evidently holding himself in with difficulty, the fellow rose stiffly from his squatting position, carefully replaced the fragment of chalk in his pocket, mopped his brow for the twentieth time, and gestured toward the cot with a moist palm. 'Now cover 'im h'up !'he ordered. "All h'up; 'ead and all.'

"The nurse gently drew the sheet over the little form. We could see it rise and fall with the regular respiration of slumber. Suddenly, eyes wide open *and staring at the floor,* the fellow began to pray, in Latin. And whatever his English, his Latin was beautiful to listen to, and virgin pure! It was too voluble for me to follow verbatim—I made as good a transcript as I could a bit later, and will be glad to show it to you, Bliven—but, anyhow, it was a prayer to Lucifer, at once an adoration and a petition, that he would vouchsafe before these Christian unbelievers a proof of his dominion over fire, earth, air and water. He ceased abruptly as he had begun, and nodded toward the cot. 'H'it is done!' he sighed, and once again mopped his forehead.

"'You infernal charlatan!' snarled Watts-Bedloe, unable longer to contain himself. 'You've got the effrontery to stand there and tell us anything has been wrought upon that child by your slobbering drivel?'

"The man looked at him with lusterless eyes. 'Look for yerself, guv-ner,' he answered.

"It was Sir William who snatched back the sheet from his son; and till my dying day I shall remember the unearthly beauty of what our astounded eyes beheld. Lying there, smile upon his lips, like a perfect form fresh from the hand of his Creator, his little limbs straight and delicately rounded, a picture of almost awesome loveliness, lay the child we had but five minutes before seen as a wrecked and broken travesty of humanity."

Again Bliven interrupted explosively:

"Oh, I say now, Royce! I'll admit you tell a ripping story, as such; you had even me hanging breathless on your climax. But this is too much! As man to man, you can't sit there and tell us this child was cured!"

"I didn't say that; for he was dead."

Bliven was speechless, for once; but Holmes spoke up in remonstrance:

"It seems strange to me that such a queer story should not have been repeated, and discussed!"

"It isn't strange, if you happen to know anything about London hospitals," Royce explained patiently. "Who would repeat it? Would Watts-Bedloe permit it to be known that by his permission some charlatan was admitted, and that during his devilish incantations his patient died? Would the stricken father mention the subject, even to us? Or the head nurse and orderly, cogs in an inexorable machine?

"All this took place nearly forty years ago; and it is the first time I have spoken of it. Watts-Bedloe died years back; and Sir William's line is extinct. I can't verify a detail; but it all happened exactly as I have stated. As for the Luciferian, none of us, I think, saw him depart. He simply stole out in to the slimy yellow fog, back to whatever private hell it was he came from, somewhere in London, the city nobody knows, and where anything may happen!"

Wife Slayer Drives All Night with Body in Auto

AUTHORITIES at Charleston, Ill., were aroused by the startling story of Bruce Weiman, who recently gave himself up to the sheriff and stated that he had shot his wife, intending to commit suicide immediately afterward, but had lost his nerve and had driven all night with her body in the car.

The corpse was found in the back of the automobile, covered with a robe.

He told the coroner's jury that he found his wife with another man at a hotel in Decatur, and induced her to return to Charleston with him, planning to kill her and then commit suicide.

He said that he shot her as she sat beside him, but that after seeing her body slide to the floor, he was unable to bring himself to the point of suicide. He stated that he then drove all night with the corpse in the car, vainly trying to get up enough nerve to kill himself, but that, when morning came, he decided to surrender to authorities and let the law take its course.

A Weird Storiette

THE SPIDER

By ARTHUR EDWARDS CHAPMAN

"I TELL you, Ron, it was queer—uncanny!"

My friend, Ronald Titherington, laughed and weighed the little golden spider in his palm.

"You don't mean to suggest, do you," he replied, "that this little mass of gold and carbon is capable of exercising control over the human will? The thing is valuable, I'll grant you—those diamond eyes must be worth at least a couple of hundred apiece—but as for anything else—absurd!"

I got up and stood with my back to the fireplace, somewhat piqued at my companion's incredulity.

"You can believe it or not, Ron," I said, "but I do most certainly suggest that such a thing happened. What did I go to the sale for? Not to purchase that comparatively insignificant ornament, you must agree. No, I went to secure for my collection those things that would make it the finest in the country—and I got them.

"But I tell you, Ron, that when that little spider was put up I felt a strange desire come over me, an overpowering determination to possess the thing. I don't know why it should have been so; I'm not going to try to explain it. Beside those other antiques it was as nothing, and yet I would willingly at that moment have exchanged them all for it. The diamond eyes of the thing were magnetic; they impelled me even against my mind's ruling. I say again it was uncanny!"

Titherington listened to my rather heated recital with a quiet smile on his thin lips, and taking a cigarette from his case lit it thoughtfully.

"Let me see," he mused slowly as though speaking to himself. "Wasn't this same spider found by the body of the late Sir Nicholas Goldeby when he

was discovered dead under such mysterious circumstances some months ago?"

"Yes," I agreed. "He had brought it from the East and the police held it to be a sacred jewel, and that Sir Nicholas had met his death at the hands of some Hindu fanatics who sought to return it to the despoiled temple."

"Ah!" cried Titherington suddenly, seeming mightily pleased with himself. "So you remember all that, do you?"

"Of course," I said, surprised. "Why not, seeing that I had so great an interest in the dead man's collection?"

"Then don't you think," he said deliberately, "that it was the very happenings associated with the spider that caused you to act as you did? In other words, wasn't it a case of intensely heightened imagination?"

"You mean it was my vivid recollection of the facts connected with the case that made me desire to possess the thing, and that I attributed to the spider a power which really was the outcome of my own eagerness?" I shook my head unconvinced.

"Exactly. Look here, Alan, the facts fit together like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. Didn't you say a dark foreign man bid against you very heavily for the jewel, and when you outbid him he implored you to let him have it? Well, what is more natural than that the guardians of the jewel, having failed to obtain it by force, should seek to take advantage of this opportunity to secure it? It seems to me, Alan, that you have need to watch against human rather than supernatural powers."

"Then you think that the foreigner might try to steal the spider from me?"

"Yes," Titherington replied, getting up and stretching himself. "Take my advice and keep your eye on the thing. . . . Well, I'm off to bed; it's eleven o'clock. Good-night, old man."

I bade him good-night, and after he had gone lit another cigarette and sat before the dying fire for a final smoke, casting my thoughts back over the strange events of the day.

FOR all my friend's reasoning I was not convinced. There was something strange about that golden spider, I was sure.

I gazed at it where it rested upon a little china-cabinet by the window, and tried to read some signs of hidden force in those great diamond eyes. But no, the thing was ordinary enough; simply a mass of gold and carbon as Titherington had said.

Throwing the stump of my cigarette into the fireplace I rose slowly and switched off the light. Then I retired, feeling well pleased with myself and the world in general as the result of my day's work, and wishing nothing better than to yield myself to the goddess of Sleep.

But for once that deity, usually so quick to respond to my call, failed to smile favorably upon me, and I turned restlessly in my bed, listening to the faint rustling of leaves outside the window and the multitudinous other sounds that materialize in so mysterious a manner in the fancy of the wakeful.

In the hall below the great clock chimed the half of eleven, and I found myself counting its ponderous ticks and picturing the massive pendulum swinging, always swinging, slowly, monotonously in its glass prison. *Tick-tock, tick-tock,* it went, forcing itself on me with such insistence that presently I could no longer hear it through the very intensity of my listening.

Once more I turned on my left side and faced the window which was wide open, the night being a warm one. The moon had risen and a narrow beam of light shone between the curtains, painting a silvery path along the carpet to the door, so that I was able mentally to trace the grotesque forms of impossible flowers twining their way through Greek keys that failed to unlock the door of the Temple of Sleep.

Ding-dong — Ding-dong — Ding-dong chimed the never-sleeping sentinel, and as I listened to the knell of the quarter which had passed I became suddenly conscious of a new sound of which I had not been aware before and which I could not reconcile with any known cause. It was a strange muffled drumming—something like the ticking of a watch within a metal cylinder. . .

Of course! It was the ticking of my own watch hung upon the bedrail which acted as a sounding-board for it! I smiled to myself as the utter simplicity of the explanation came to me and raised my head confidently to confirm my reasoning.

The watch had stopped at twenty-five minutes past eleven!

Strange. What could it have been? I listened as I propped myself upon my elbow, but now I could not hear it. It must have been fancy, I thought, and lay down again, but barely had my head touched the pillow than *thump!—thump! —thump!* came the noise with mechanical regularity. And then, with stunning force, the solution hurled itself at me as I pressed a hand against my breast.

It was the beating of my own heart!

A hot, clammy wave passed over my body at this realization; an unreasoning, nervous dread took possession of me and I knew that I was afraid, horribly afraid of something which had no tangible existence.

As I struggled with this strange feeling and called myself a fool for permitting fears of so childish a nature to overcome me, I saw something that caused my heart to give a great leap and my blood to chill in my veins.

Framed in the doorway, glaring at me from the impenetrable blackness of the corridor beyond, were two large unblinking eyes, shining in the reflected light like the head-lamps of a motor, *gleaming like a couple of immense diamonds.* Then, as I gazed in unbounded horror at the glittering eyes, a great hairy leg crept slowly, hesitatingly into the silver beam, feeling the ground before it in wavering uncertainty. Presently this was joined by another and yet a third, hovering in mid-air for a few seconds before they came to rest on the carpet.

I tried to turn my head away in fearful anticipation of what was to come, but I could not. There was something magnetic, uncanny about those diamond eyes that *impelled me even against my mind's ruling.* And as I sat helplessly, bound with fetters of unspeakable dread, the wavering legs were followed by a fearsome skull-like head armed with a pair of great pincer fangs that opened and closed continuously with a rasping, clicking sound which caused my very hair to bristle, and presently the thing stood revealed in its hideous, loathsome entirety.

There it was, ruddy-golden in the moonlight, evil, horrible, like some huge hairy bear.

Merciful heaven! It was the spider!

AND it was coming toward me with those hesitating, creeping steps, slowly, noiselessly. I tried to cry out, but my tongue refused to articulate; I would have leaped from the bed and fled before this nightmare, but I could not move. That sinister, magnetic eye held me motionless, and I groaned inwardly with indescribable anguish, while the hot perspiration stood in beads on my forehead.

Nearer and nearer it drew. Its outstretched legs felt the coverlet, they brushed my shrinking body. Horror! They enfolded me in an ever-tightening embrace.

I stared into those awful gleaming orbs that seemed to gloat over my helplessness, and for a tense moment the thing remained motionless.

(Continued on page 84)

The Final Thrilling Installment of

The Amazing Adventure of Joe Scranton

By EFFIE W. FIFIELD

CHAPTER SIX

ONE night, after eating a hearty supper, I slipped out of the house, unobserved, and made my way to a sort of shallow cave I had found under an overhanging rock beside the sea. It was an ideal place in which to leave Jack Walsh's body.

I went straight to my own home. It was closed and dark. I searched every room. All were empty save one, which was occupied by the housekeeper. I went to the barn. The horses were there, and the coachman, who was also our chauffeur, slept soundly in his snug room overhead. The garage was locked. My car had not been used.

I returned to the house, and tried to find some scrap of paper—a forgotten note—anything that might tell me what had happened, but in vain. I next went to the house occupied by Angeline's father, and there, in the room which had been hers as a girl, I saw my wife. The lamp burned dimly, and a nurse sat beside the bed.

I breathed a prayer of thankfulness that Angeline had been removed from the presence of my enemy, even though I realized that I might find it difficult to win her back again. It was evident that, womanlike, she had resented the treatment of her supposed husband, and gone home to mother.

But what had become of my body? I went to Helen's room. She lay quietly beside her husband, who had raised himself upon his elbow, and was earnestly studying her face. He appeared greatly perplexed. He spoke to her, but she made no reply. He shook her, but she did not awaken. I saw, at once, that she had astralized herself, and that Colonel Saunders had discovered that she was in an abnormal condition.

I did not doubt that Helen had astralized herself. Perhaps she had made an appointment with my enemy. As likely as not she was with him now. If so, she would at once understand the true condition of affairs, and she might help me out of my fearful predicament.

"What next?" I murmured. "Shall I try to find Helen, or would it be better for me to remain where I am and await her return?"

It was agony to believe that my body was somewhere, untenanted, and I did not know where. Oh, if I could only know its whereabouts! If only I could get to it before my enemy suspected my presence!

I finally decided to go to our most dearly loved haunts, hoping to find Helen. Anything was better than this state of inaction. As luck would have it, I had gone but a little distance from Helen's house, when I came face to face with the astral of my enemy.

"Where is my body?" I demanded.

"I will tell you that when I am ready to give it up," was his insolent reply.

I have since thought that the worst part of being without a body is one's inability to stand up to a good square fight, and that is my only objection to being an angel when I die. Should I meet Jack Walsh in heaven, I know I'd whip him if I could.

"Bye-bye, Sonny," he said, with a leer. "Kiss Liz, for me, and mind you keep my body in good repair. I may want it some day."

He floated off, and I decided to follow him and take a chance on getting into my body first. If I failed, I should at least have the satisfaction of seeing it and knowing where to look for it another time. But Jack divined my thought, and immediately turned to me.

"Old chap," he said, "you'll be sorry if you attempt that. I shall not go near your body as long as you follow me. If it dies I don't care. You have probably guessed that it makes little difference to me whether I ever see my old shell again, or not. I might as well be an astral for the rest of my life, anyhow, but you don't feel that way, so you'd best go away back and sit down."

He had me in his power, and knew it. I turned away without another word, unwiling to do aught that would imperil my precious body. Without doubt, the existence of an astral was preferable to that led by Jack Walsh, but it was not more desirable than the life to which I had been accustomed.

I searched for Helen as long as I dared leave Jack's body. I searched in vain. There was nothing to do but return to the spot where I had hidden the body, and take up its horrible routine. This time it had not been molested. I crept into it, warmed it up, and wearily dragged it to the poverty-stricken home of Jack Walsh. The sun was just rising, when I entered the room, but the brisk Jane was already about her work.

"Good morning," said I.

"Humph!" was her reply. "Well, you certainly have not been on a spree this time! Going to work today?"

"Yes," I replied, knowing that it was the only chance I had to keep my borrowed body alive. It seemed to me that it required more food than three such bodies ought to need.

"Liz is in the next room. She sat up all night waiting for you, and has only just dropped asleep."

"Let her sleep. I'll work, and you may give her all I earn except just what is needed to buy food enough to keep me from starving, but I'll be blest if I ever want to see her again."

"Jack, what's got hold of you?"

"That is none of your business. Come, let's have breakfast, and be off as soon as possible."

"There were men here to see you last night. Did you expect them?"

"No."

"One was short and—"

"I don't care anything about them."

**This story began in the October issue of WEIRD TALES. A copy will be mailed by the publishers for 25 cents.*

"I fancy they meant you no good. Have you been getting yourself into trouble?"

"Not in any way that you can understand."

"Well, here's your breakfast. I have engaged sweeping enough to keep you busy all day."

I ate my breakfast, and went to work. I was glad to work. Do you know, I have since reached the conclusion that there are many idle people who would be willing to make themselves useful, if they were not afraid of soiling their precious bodies, or of making them crooked, or otherwise unpresentable. I had always hesitated about doing anything that would harden my hands or make them rough, but I did not care a penny for Jack Walsh's hands. In fact, I gloried in the knowledge that they were getting some quite unaccustomed blisters and proving themselves of greater use than anyone had ever suspected they could be.

Jane collected my earnings as before. At noon she offered me a pint of ale, but I refused it. Then she went to a shop and bought a really good dinner for me. She said she was almost ready to believe that Liz had known me best after all, and in many ways she showed that her opinion of me was rising. But she did not trust me with one penny of the money I had earned.

About the middle of the afternoon, a sheriff and posse called upon me.

"Are you Jack Walsh?" asked the sheriff.

"I am supposed to be."

"That does not answer my question. Are you Jack Walsh? Yes or no."

"Yes."

I did not like to say it, but what else could I have said?

"I believe you lie."

"You're right about that," I replied. "My real name is Joe Scranton. I own a pretty home in Wisconsin, U. S. A. My wife's name is Angeline."

"You dotty old nut, what are you giving us!"

"I'm telling you the truth, but I don't expect you to believe it."

"Haven't you been calling yourself Jack Walsh?"

"No, I haven't; but I have answered to that name."

"This is the fellow who asked me where Jack Walsh lived," said a man in the crowd. I recognized him as the one who had dared me to bet the treats that I was not a relative of Jack Walsh.

"Oh, Jack, Jack, what have you been doing now?"

Liz pushed her way through the crowd that had rapidly collected around me, and attempted to throw herself into my arms. She was weeping, and her lips were puckered ready for kissing.

"Get out of here!" I shouted. "If you touch me I'll kill you!"

"For shame!" said the sheriff.

"Kiss her yourself, if you think it is any fun," I retorted.

"That is not Jack Walsh," said a voice in the crowd. "Jack was mean enough, the Lord knows, but he did let his wife kiss him."

"How long has he been like this?" asked the sheriff of Jane.

"Two or three days," was the reply, "but for the Lord's sake don't bring him out of it."

"Have you noticed that he won't allow Mrs. Walsh to kiss him?"

"Not if he can help it; he seems dead set against it."

"Yet you wish him to remain as he is."

"You bet I do."

"Why? Are you getting his kisses?"

"Me? I? You mean *me!* What yeh hintin' at, you big stiff? Think I'd let that bum come near enough to kiss me? Why, I'd blow him into the middle of next week."

"Well, then, what is the reason you want him to remain as he is?"

"He's working for the first time in his life, and he's quit pounding Liz to a jelly."

"What does he do with his money?"

"I keep it. He say I can spend it on Liz, but he'd be tickled stiff if he never had to see her again."

"My man," he said, turning to me, "I guess you have not lived with Mrs. Walsh long enough to know her many good qualities. You may come with me."

I decided to go quietly, for I certainly could not be in a much worse position.

I was taken before a judge and examined, and it was proved beyond the possibility of doubt that I was not Jack Walsh. I could not answer the simplest questions about the former life of that individual. I did not know how many little Walshes I was responsible for, how many had died, how many were boys, nor which ones belonged to my first wife. Neither could I tell whether that wife had been separated from me by death, or divorce.

It was plain that I was not Jack Walsh; then who was I? And what was my little game? And where was Jack? I looked like Jack, they said, but that proved nothing. Many men had a double. Jane and Liz had never heard him mention a brother; but Jane said something to the effect that Jack was devilish enough to have a penitentiary full of relatives, and nothing could be worse than she had all along suspected.

I discovered that I was arrested for murdering two women in Whitechapel. I was supposed to be Jack the Ripper. There seemed to be a great deal of evidence against me, and there was every reason to believe that I should be hung.

The problem that now presented itself was this: If Jack's physical body were to be hung what would become of my astral body? Of course, if I could obtain possession of my own body before Jack learned of the probable fate of his —but *could* I? I thought of astralizing myself just before the ceremony of hanging, as one way out of the difficulty; but soon dismissed that idea as useless. My jailers would simply try to restore me to consciousness—hang me if successful, and bury me if unsuccessful. The prospect was gloomy enough, whatever way one looked at it.

Finally, I was left alone in my cell, and, without loss of time, I stretched Jack's tired body on the iron pallet, and escaped, speeding my way home to Angeline. I had not gone half the distance when I met Jack Walsh.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, quite fraternally. "Want your old body back?"

"Lord, yes!" I began, with joyful enthusiasm, then, suddenly deciding to appear a little more diplomatic, I continued in carefully measured tones: "Of course, if you're through with it—umm! while I've had some interesting experiences in your body—er—ah—m—m—most interesting; yet—ah—*you* know—one's own body fits just a little better."

"Don't palaver! Mine's a rotten old shell, and you know it."

"Mine is far from being perfect," I murmured, wondering what argument I could use to persuade him to abandon it forever.

"Oh, I'm not making any kicks about the body! It's your family that gets my goat."

"My family?"

"Your women have never been taught to treat men with respect. Now you can't make any such complaint against my old woman. She's been trained!"

"She certainly has!" I exclaimed with all the cordiality at my command.

"Think she'll be glad to get me back again?"

"Why—e-h ye-es! I think she will. She seems surprisingly fond of you."

"That's more'n I can say for you and your damned skirt.

"You'll know, soon enough! Oh, you're going to get it in the neck! You'll get it good and plenty, and 'twill serve you jolly well right—whatever you get."

"Sir!" I exclaimed. "Explain yourself."

"I've got drunk—and I've knocked my old woman round a bit; but I never ran away with any other woman. I'm pretty rotten, all right, all right—but compared to *you* I'm a lily-white angel."

The contempt in the man's voice was so cutting that I quite naturally became enraged.

"What do you mean, you dirty, lazy wife-beater," I demanded.

"Better ask Colonel Saunders," he leered. "He's waiting for you with a strong, new, black snake whip."

I was so shaken with anger that the electrons composing my body seemed to lose all sense of relationship. For a time—I knew not how long—I was as if I were not. When I once more realized that I was I, there were many thousands of miles of atmosphere between Jack Walsh and me. And suddenly I remembered I had neither told my enemy where his body was to be found, nor ascertained the resting place of my own.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE problem that now confronted me was "How am I to find my own body and take possession before Jack Walsh discovers that his body is to be hung?"

I didn't know which way to turn, but finally decided to be guided by my great longing to see Angeline. I would go to the old home, first. She must have returned by this time. I could not believe she would want to remain away when she had taken time to remember how good I'd always been to her.

The house was dark, empty, silent as on my last visit. Not one little clue could I find to the last resting place of my beloved body.

I went to the home of my wife's parents. Angeline lay on the bed where I had last seen her. She seemed to be sleeping, but there were traces of tears on her cheek. In her hand was a copy of the evening paper. I glanced at the words which she had evidently been reading, when she fell asleep.

"SCANDAL IN HIGH LIFE!"

Those were the words I saw, in the most insolent of bold-faced type. I read the article through to the end. It told how I, Joseph Scranton, had cruelly beaten my wife, Angeline, with my bootjack in the presence of witnesses, and how she had taken the advice of her family and friends and instituted proceedings for a divorce. It hinted that I had long been addicted to the use of drugs, but had been very successful in disguising the fact, and ended by promising its readers that if they would visit the court house at a certain hour of a certain day they would be regaled with other bits of juicy news concerning the Scranton family, and a certain other family, well known in social circles.

I do not attempt to quote, but simply give a synopsis of an article that, without doubt, made me the maddest astral in the universe.

I could gain nothing by staying where I was, so I decided to go to Helen's house. Perhaps I might learn something there about myself. If I could only have known how long a time had elapsed since my body had been vacated, I might not have been so worried. It was terrible to think that the earthly me might even now be dying.

Yet why should I want to live when Angeline was going to get a divorce? What would life be worth, if it must be lived without her? I had never believed in divorces, and now I was more than ever against a country where the laws made them possible. Why could not Angeline have had more faith in me? So far as she could know, she had had no cause to doubt me. Why should not her love for me have told her that I could not strike her, and be myself?

Of course, if she could have known of my atmospherical journeys with Helen, that would, undoubtedly, have caused her to lose faith in me, but how could she know of them? Even if she were told, her limited knowledge of occult laws would have moved her to say that it was not possible. I did not want Angeline to obtain a divorce. I believed that if I could get possession of my body, send for her, let her see that I was my own lovable self, I could easily win her back again, and all would be well with us, forever after.

My first glance at Helen, on reaching her room, told me that she had again astralized herself. I turned to leave the room and caught sight of a card which she had put in a conspicuous place beside the clock on her dressing table. It contained the words, *"Beside the little lake in Italy."*

Like a flash these words illumined my mind. Helen had guessed that a strange astral had possession of my body. She believed that, in my consequent unhappiness, I might visit her, and she had written these words, hoping that I might see them, and join her on the shore of the beautiful lake which our astral bodies had once visited.

In a remarkably short space of time—as time is usually measured—I was on my way to Italy, I had found Helen, and we were exchanging confidences.

"That is what I thought," she said, when I had told her of Jack Walsh. "The whisky and tobacco on your library table first aroused my suspicions."

"Did you explain to Angeline?"

"Explain to Angeline! Humph! Wait until you've tried it."

"You have tried to explain?"

"I have." Her tone was ominous.

"She couldn't understand?"

"She didn't try. Neither will anyone else. But I'm not worrying about you. I've troubles of my own. What do you suppose is in store for me?"

"Nothing very bad, I hope."

"My husband has seen a physician about me. There has been a consultation. It has been decided that my brain is inflamed by pressure and that I'm a fit subject for trepanning—"

"Trepanning! You can't mean trepanning."

"That is exactly what I mean. That's what I have to thank you for. I ought to be in my body this instant. If they find it unconscious—why, it may be on the operating table now—this very moment!"

"Yet you took the chance of leaving it, just to meet me—"

"Not because I wanted to, believe me. If only I never had seen you—"

"Similar thoughts visit me about four times a minute," I interrupted, politely sarcastic.

"I had to see you," continued Helen, "to let you know that it's up to you to get me out of this frightful mess."

"Up to me!"

"Certainly. You got me into it."

"Dragged you in, I suppose," I breathed, icily.

"You've got to go back to your own body—at once," commanded Helen—

"You don't mean it!" I sneered.

"Then you've got to convince those doctors, and my poor, dear husband—"

"Who carries a black snake whip—"

"Coward! Suppose he does use it on you! Is that anything to compare with my suffering!"

"Nothing at all. I'm having a blissful time."

"Joe, please go back to your body. I'll try to restrain my husband."

"So good of you! Will you kindly tell me where I can find my body?"

"In the work house. Didn't you know?"

"Work house! My body in the work house!"

"Sent up for ninety days; drunkenness."

Work house! Ninety days. My body. Oh, if I only had Jack Walsh by the scruff of the neck for one sweet minute—but why snort fire and brim-

stone! What had I done to him? Wouldn't he find his body in jail—about to be hung for murder?

When I opened my eyes, at the work house, I found two doctors and several nurses working over me, while the work-house officials looked on. It was believed that I had attempted suicide, and the interesting problem was, what had I taken that brought me so near to death's door, yet gave none of the usual indications of poisoning? They questioned me in vain. What would they have said had I informed them that I had not located my body until it was almost too late to save it! Since I could not tell the truth, it seemed better to keep still.

"What he needs," said one of the doctors, severely, "is plenty of hard work."

"We'll see that he gets it," replied the man in charge.

He kept his word.

Eighty-nine days left in which to pound rocks. Nothing I could say would convince the wooden-headed superintendent that I did not deserve all that and as much more. I was taken under guard to meet Angeline, my dear wife, in the divorce court.

Oh, the agony of that moment! My hands, which had been soft and white when last they clasped hers, were now rough and bleeding. A bit of flying stone had hit me on one cheek, leaving a cruel cut and closing one eye. One front tooth was missing—a result of a hand-to-hand scrimmage in which Jack Walsh had come off second best, and the suit I wore also bore mute evidence of the way my poor body must have been dragged around a very dirty floor.

The court room was crowded. It was proved by many who had once called me friend that I had struck my wife, swore at her in the presence of our friends, shown no concern when she lay ill as a result of my behavior. Finally, it was stated that I was now serving a term in the work house for drunkenness.

My attorney had advised me not to make any attempt to defend myself. "Better let your wife have her divorce," he said. "You and she could never be happy together, after all that has happened between you—and public feeling is so strong against you that the quieter you keep the better it will be for you."

He was right. I should have listened to him, and kept out of that court room. But I could not do it. I had to see Angeline. I could not believe she would allow the divorce proceedings to continue, when she saw me there before her.

I should have kept silence, no matter what they said against me—but I could not. I felt impelled to try to defend myself. I must. But what could I say? I obtained permission to speak—I stood up—I fixed my eyes—my one good eye—on my wife.

"Angeline," I said, "you know I did not do all that has been charged against me, here today. Your heart tells you that I couldn't possibly have done it—that I was never like that—"

"Not before you became a drunkard," sobbed Angeline. "I'll admit that it was drink that changed you."

"I do not drink," I protested. "I loathe the taste of liquor— just as I always have. I persuaded my jailers to tempt me—they will tell you I never touched a drop of the best Scotch procurable, although it remained in my cell for forty-eight hours."

"He really seems to have reformed," ventured my attorney.

"Reform nothing!" I retorted with very natural indignation. "I tell you, I never did drink. I never swore. I never struck my wife—"

"May I ask who did strike her?" inquired Angeline's attorney, in a tone that rasped like a file.

Then it all came back, and things went black before me. For a moment I had forgotten that I had not lived in my own body as continuously as I should have done.

"I will tell you who struck my wife," I said, desperately, as I faced my tormentor. "To understand, you must believe me when I tell you that I know how to astralize myself. You must believe me when I tell you that I left my body for a little while and another astral took possession."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Angeline's attorney, "what an alibi!"

"Can you beat that?" said Angeline's father, who, for the moment looked too dazed to be indignant.

I turned to Angeline, and held out my hands, imploringly. "Try to believe me," I said. "You know I have never lied to you, Dearest, it was not I who struck you—"

"Who was it, then?" snapped the attorney.

"He is named Jack Walsh," I replied, steadily. "His home is in England, where the court officials claim he is Jack the Ripper. He has been convicted of murder. He has a poor, unfortunate, slatternly ill-used wife named Liz—"

I was interrupted by a roar of laughter. Even the Judge laughed. I tried to elaborate my explanation—but no one would hear me—*could* hear me, as a matter of fact. I was simply a joke. There were some formalities that I was too indignant to follow, and then my wife was assured that she was no longer related to me, and I was escorted back to the work house.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A SENSATIONAL newspaper took up my story. A reporter was allowed to visit me. He was sympathetic, and I bared my very soul. He promised to help me, and left me feeling greatly comforted.

Time passed slowly. Nothing happened, and I believed myself forgotten. And then a Sunday edition of that sensational paper was allowed to reach me. There were pictures of my home, Angeline, myself; the Saunders home, Helen and her husband; Jack Walsh, Liz and Jane, and the sordid place they called home.

There was confession from Jack Walsh, and attention was called to the fact that he was hung on the "Friday before this paper goes to press." Jack told with convincing detail many episodes of his life with Angeline; and how, after swearing at her the first time he returned to the room intending to kiss and make up; but he found her face daubed with mud, which made him so infernally mad that he hit her with a boot jack instead of kissing her, "and by thunder," he added, "wouldn't any red-blooded man have did that same?"

That newspaper article made a tremendous sensation. It completely alienated Colonel Saunders and Helen, both of whom fled to parts unknown—but not together. The city rocked with laughter. They could not bear it. The only mitigating circumstance in that tragedy was that Helen was saved from the trepanning ordeal. She now had the bitter knowledge that her husband no longer cared whether she needed it, or not.

My time at the work house had expired. It had been shortened by my excellent behavior.

I waited only long enough to scrub my toil-worn hands before hastening to my home—and my wife. That Sunday supplement had been shocking, but I figured that it must, at least, have given me the benefit of the doubt in the mind of Angeline. She must know, now, that it was Jack Walsh, not I, who had caused her so much misery. Of course she would still have much to forgive, but when she realized how I had suffered—how penitent I was—

My father-in-law met me at the door of my home. He placed himself so that I could not enter without difficulty.

"We expected you," he said, grimly. "My daughter wishes you to be advised that your personal effects have been

packed, and will be sent to any address you may mention."

"Hell!" I ejaculated, with some heat.

"Does that mean we are to burn them?" he asked, a glimmer of amusement in his eyes. "There's no use in fussing about it," he added, more genially. "Angeline intends to abide by the decision of the divorce court."

"But surely she is convinced that it was not I who ill-treated her," I pleaded.

"I think she gives you the benefit of the doubt so far as the boot-jack episode is concerned; but to do that is to admit that you ran away with the wife of another man."

"But under conditions so spiritual—"

"Tut-tut, Scranton! Don't beg the question. There's no getting away from the fact that you did not invite you wife to your little astralization party. I will bid you good-evening, Mr. Scranton."

"Stand aside," I ordered, "this is still my home—"

"I advise you to see your lawyer, Mr. Scranton. Good-evening." And he shut my own door in my outraged face.

I went to a hotel where I had long been a welcomed guest, and was received with scant courtesy and ill-concealed amusement, then hustled into an undesirable apartment.

"Not satisfactory? Sorry, Mr. Scranton, but all we have," in a detached, take-it-or-leave-it tone.

I locked myself into my room, found stationery in the dusty little desk, and put my whole soul into an impassioned appeal to my wife. I laid my heart bare and pleaded as I shall never be able to plead again. Scalding tears rolled down my cheeks, as I wrote, and dropped on the paper. I allowed them to remain, thinking that it would not be many hours before tears from Angeline's eyes would be keeping them company.

I could not believe that my wife had ceased to love me. She was only jealous, and jealousy should never discourage a truly ardent lover. Of course she would eventually agree, with me, that I had suffered enough—

After hours of waiting that seemed like a taste of eternity my wife's letter was brought to me. Here it is:

"Mr. Scranton: If I had never idealized you, what you did to me would have been less hard to bear. Because you have deceived me, I can never again believe in your protestations of affection. I did my best—and failed to satisfy you. And if I am to believe your amazing story how am I ever to know that the man I greet in the morning is the same man who kissed me good-night. Life with a man like you is not sufficiently stable to offer any attraction to a woman of my domestic nature. Better get yourself a 'Liz' or a 'Helen.'

"Good-by forever,
"Angeline."

The finality of that note was sickening and maddening. I tore it into bits and burned them; then wished I had trampled upon them before throwing them into the grate.

Talk to me of the unswerving love, the divine comprehension, the sweet forgiveness, the madonna-like motherliness of a wife's love! Hm! Nothing to it. I tramped about that room like a caged lion lashing himself into fury with a carpet tack under his toes. At heart I was a murderer. I couldn't kill Jack Walsh, because that which would have been a pleasure to me had already been accomplished by law.

But there still remained Hicks Carew, and Tod Storrs who had introduced me to him, and Angeline and her father, and Colonel Saunders and Helen—and my brain teemed with schemes whereby each could be made to pay the penalty before I was caught—And I wouldn't be caught, because I could so easily leave my body and never return to it!

While these thoughts were chasing one another through my fevered brain, my door opened as easily as if it had not been locked. It closed softly and locked itself. Hicks Carew stood before me.

"Why despair?" he asked, genially. "You won her love, once; why not again? With your experience—"

"Damn my experience!" I exploded, "And damn you! Get out of here before I kill you."

"You'll feel better now it is out of your system," he said, with gentle sympathy. "And now let me tell you how you can not only win back all you have lost, but add to it a thousand fold—"

"I tell you," I panted, "I want no more of your advice. If it hadn't been for you—"

"Remember," he cautioned, interrupting me, "I came into the game *after* you had become interested in your neighbor's wife, not before. You were ripe for the experiment and in need of the lesson it taught. But—you have suffered enough."

"Much you care about that," I growled, endeavoring to be firm in my refusal to listen to him, yet wondering if he really could help me win back my wife's love.

"You have suffered," continued Hicks Carew, "and if you will you may reap an hundred fold in satisfaction for every pang you have endured. As a philosopher—"

"A what?" I interrupted.

"A philosopher. A great psychic teacher. A professor of occultism. Your hair curls naturally. Let it grow as long as it will. Likewise your beard. We'll create a uniform for you—something very artistic and becoming. You'll soon be idolized. Women will profess themselves crazy about you. Your wife will be proud to bear your name. She will beg you to take her back."

"But a philosopher," I gasped—"a teacher—a professor—I couldn't do it."

"Why not? Have you not proved that the body is only the house of the soul? Can you not say from experience that it is possible for the human tabernacle to harbor different personalities at different times? Can you not warn your pupils of the dangers of astralization? My friend, if you will you can do much to make this world a much more interesting dwelling place than it has ever been, because your experience gives a foundation for a serious belief in a life quite independent of physical limitation. Besides," he added, "you will find that I am pointing out the only way whereby you can ever again be interesting to Angeline."

It is midnight. Hicks Carew left only a few moments ago.

IT is queer what a hold occultism can get on a man once he begins to explore its mysteries. I should not advise anyone—unless, possibly, an enemy—ever to begin.

I am thinking of Angeline, not as the late Mrs. Scranton, but as the girl I knew before we were united in the holy bonds of matrimony. She was most alluring. Our courtship was delightful. She was very proud of me.

Yes, it is a fact that I have always loved Angeline. I believe I can win her again.

THE END

THE IRON ROOM

Another Paul Pry Story

By FRANCIS D. GRIERSON

PAUL PRY had just finished breakfast when Colonel Fairbody arrived.

"Good morning, Colonel," said Paul cheerfully; "have you fed?"

"An hour ago," replied his friend. "Do you want to look into a queer case with me?"

"My dear Colonel," replied Paul, who was accustomed to the other's brusque manner, "you know I consider it a privilege when you allow me to share your confidence—"

"No soft soap," interrupted the Colonel, chuckling; "you've been damned useful to us more than once, as you know quite well. I owe you a good turn, or two. But if you're coming you'll have to hurry. I've got a car waiting. Tell your man to pack a small bag; we may have to stay a night or two."

Paul rang the bell, and in ten minutes the Colonel and he were driving rapidly through the streets.

Colonel Fairbody, the Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, knew Paul Pry as an eccentric young millionaire who devoted his time to the science of criminology. Why he had adopted the suggestive name of "Paul Pry" the Colonel—like his colleagues in the police forces of half a dozen other countries—would have been interested to learn, but that was a secret known only to Paul himself. The amateur had acquired the confidence of the professional, however, by the services he had rendered to the Yard on several occasions, and the Colonel had a sincere respect for the reasoning powers which had led Paul to the solution of certain singular problems in which they had both been engaged.

"Would it be indiscreet to inquire where we are going?" asked Paul, in his quiet way, as they began to leave the suburbs behind and to plunge into pleasant country lanes.

"Not at all; we are bound for a little place called Stonebridge, in Hertfordshire."

"The Carfax Chemical Company, no doubt," suggested Paul.

The Colonel was an old hand.

"I am not going to shout 'Marvelous!'" he replied. "You are probably quite aware that the only important place in that neighborhood is the Carfax Chemical Works."

"Where they make agreeable experiments in the art of blowing up people."

"Precisely. Mr. Gerald Carfax, the famous chemist, has his laboratories there. He does a good deal of work for the Government."

"And I suppose some valuable secret formula has been stolen?"

"Not at all; at least, not so far as I am aware at present. To tell you the truth, I know very little about the matter myself."

"But you consider it sufficiently important—"

"To come down at once? I do. Carfax is an old friend of mine, and I am satisfied that he would not have telephoned to me, as he did this morning, unless he had good grounds for doing so. But I think it will be as well to let him tell his own story; the few facts I already know would be of little use to you."

Paul acquiesced, and the two men chatted desultorily until the car, passing by a row of irregular buildings, turned into a tree-bordered drive and drew up before the door of a comfortable stone house, where Carfax, a pleasant, elderly man with keen grey eyes, welcomed them heartily.

PAUL, at his own desire, was introduced as an unofficial assistant to the Colonel, and Carfax led the way to his library.

"I am greatly obliged to you, Fairbody," he said, as they seated themselves, "for coming down so promptly. I would not have asked you to do so if I had not thought the matter one of considerable importance."

"Of course not," said the Colonel, in his crisp way. "Please tell us the whole story; Mr. Pry knows nothing of it as yet."

"It is a queer business," replied the chemist, meditatively. "Of course, there may be some simple explanation, but I confess it baffles me. I will be as brief as possible—"

"Don't," interrupted the Colonel. "Just tell us everything you can think of; you may leave out something important if you don't."

Mr. Carfax bowed.

"Well," he replied, "I will assume that you know nothing about our work here. We are engaged in the manufacture of various chemical compounds, most of them of a secret nature. In addition, we are constantly engaged in experiments with the object of discovering new methods of using the information we obtain. So much for that; I need not go into details unless some point arises on which you may desire fuller information. I have a fairly large staff, all of whom are persons of good character, as you will naturally expect. But only a few of them know more than the actual work on which they are engaged.

"I have, however, two assistants who are aware of almost all my secrets, and it is of these I particularly desire to speak—or, rather, of one of them. They are John Martin, my chief assistant, and Roland Vayne, a distant relation, who looks after all the electrical and mechanical side of the place. Vayne has suddenly disappeared."

"When?" asked Paul.

"The day before yesterday."

"Why on earth did you not let me know before?"

"I ought to have done so, I suppose," replied Mr. Carfax; "But you know how one dislikes making mountains out of molehills. The circumstances were so unusual that at first I thought he would turn up in a day or so and apologize."

"Apologize for what?"

"Well, this is what happened: Martin and Vayne have rooms in an iron building a short distance from this house. I am going to build a specially equipped addition to the existing works, and I had this iron building put up to accommodate certain special men until the new place is ready. Two days ago, in the afternoon, I asked my daughter Stella to go over to the works with a message for John Martin. She will confirm what I am telling you, presently, but she is a good deal upset, and I thought it would save her some distress if I told you the facts first."

"Certainly," said Paul. "Pray go on."

"According to what she tells me," resumed Carfax, "she went across to the iron building and entered Martin's room, which is half sitting-room and half laboratory, for some of his experiments occupy many hours, and he reads or writes, or amuses himself with his gramophone while they are in progress. She entered the room, as I say, but found that Martin was not there. Supposing—as was, in fact, the case—that he was somewhere about the other buildings, she waited for his return.

"While doing so, she noticed on his gramophone a new record, and set the instrument working. She had been listening to the music for some minutes when the door was flung open and Roland Vayne rushed in. He was in an extraordinary state of excitement and was shouting something which she did not catch clearly. He ran to her and gave her a violent push, and she fell, striking her head against the iron floor. She was stunned for a few moments, and when she recovered Vayne had gone. From that moment I have seen nothing of him. None of his clothes or other effects have been touched, as far as we know. That, really, is all I know about the matter."

"I think," said Paul, after a short silence, "that it would be well—if Colonel Fairbody agrees—to see Miss Carfax. I need not assure you, Mr. Carfax, that we fully realize how painfully such an occurrence must have affected her."

"I will send for her at once," Carfax answered, and in a few moments Stella entered the room.

Tall and beautifully proportioned, she was a splendid specimen of the fairest type of English womanhood. She moved with the easy grace of a girl who knew how to handle gun and rod with no inconsiderable skill, and her broad brow and the firm, though delicate line of her chin hinted at a well-balanced mind.

She was pale, but otherwise showed little sign of the shock she had received, and she greeted the newcomers with a pleasant cordiality.

"Miss Carfax," began Paul, after a whispered word with Colonel Fairbody, "your father has told us of the strange behavior of Mr. Vayne, and we are anxious to help him to clear up the mystery. If you will allow me, there are one or two questions I should like to ask you; I am sure you will understand that I intend no impertinence—"

"Certainly," replied the girl composedly.

"You were unable, Mr. Carfax has told us, to understand what Mr. Vayne was saying as he attacked you?"

"He was so excited that he was mixing up his words. He seemed to be saying something about going away, or it might have been that he was telling me to go away."

Paul considered this for a few moments.

"Miss Carfax," he resumed, "I am compelled to ask you this: was Mr. Vayne in love with you?"

Stella colored, but she answered steadily:

"I am afraid he was, or had been."

"Had been?"

Mr. Carfax broke in.

"I should tell you," he said, "that Vayne proposed to Stella some time ago, but she did not care for him. I believed that he had taken his refusal in a manly way, until his extraordinary behavior two days ago. Of course, that may have had nothing to do with it."

"And is Miss Carfax engaged?"

"She is engaged to John Martin."

"Ah!" said Paul softly. "The engagement is no secret?" he added.

"Oh, no; it was announced a month ago. Martin is an excellent fellow and marked out for promotion. He will be a big man in the chemical world one of these days, and from a personal point of view I could not wish for a better son-in-law."

Paul rose.

"Thank you," he said. "If you approve, Colonel, I think we might walk across now and have a look at Vayne's room and the room in which he behaved so strangely."

THE three men—for Stella did not accompany them—made their way to the works. Originally, Mr. Carfax explained, the place had been a monastery; after many years of emptiness, during which it had fallen into ruins, it had been acquired by a firm of brewers. After passing through various hands, the property had been acquired by the Carfax Chemical Company, some of the buildings converted to their needs, and a number of temporary erections made. It was the company's purpose gradually to clear the ground bit by bit, and to build new and commodious laboratories and workshops specially designed for chemical work.

The quarters occupied by Roland Vayne were in a long iron building, one story high, which was divided into a number of rooms of varying sizes. It was made of plates of iron bolted together, being at once quickly put up and proof against fire. A corridor ran from end to end of the building, at one side, each room opening off this corridor.

The room allotted to Vayne was large and comfortable enough. It was carpeted, and plainly but sufficiently furnished. Behind a curtain was his bed and dressing-table and so forth; the rest of the room served as sitting-room and study. One side of the room was filled with bookshelves, and under the window a long table held various electrical and mechanical appliances. An easy-chair, a couch, some other chairs, a pipe-rack—the sort of things one would expect to see in a bachelor's room. Vayne and Martin both took their meals at Carfax's house *en famille* and it was Carfax's intention to provide them with snug quarters in the new works which was already in course of erection.

From Vayne's room they went to that of John Martin, which adjoined it, and there they found the young man himself. Martin was a burly, cheerful fellow between twenty-five and thirty, Paul judged. The writing-table from which he rose as they entered was covered with papers and memoranda. The room was the same size as that of Vayne, and arranged somewhat similarly. Tastes and pursuits, however, accounted for some minor differences. One end of the room, for instance, was left uncarpeted, and here stood a zinc-covered bench and a small sink. There were a couple of shelves of glass jars and retorts, a Bunsen burner or two, and other devices used by the experimental chemist. The gramophone on a stand near the bench struck an oddly incongruous note, the effect of which was enhanced by a picture or two on the walls, some old china and a large vase on a wooden pedestal.

There being no fireplaces or stoves in the building, heat was supplied by means of hot water-pipes from a boiler in a small shed some distance away.

After some general conversation, Carfax proposed that they complete their tour of the works and return to his house for lunch, after which they could consider what should be done. Colonel Fairbody agreed, but Paul asked permission to remain in Vayne's room for a further examination, promising to rejoin them at the house a little later.

"Your colleague seems to have formed some theory," ventured Mr. Carfax, as the others left the temporary building.

Colonel Fairbody shrugged his shoulders.

"Pry is a strange fellow," he said. "There are few men whose theories I respect more, and I am quite sure that he has a reason for what he is doing."

"Certainly," responded Mr. Carfax, with vague politeness.

LUNCH was nearly over, but Paul had not appeared. Mr. Carfax had hospitably desired to go and fetch his guest to the house by main force, but Colonel Fairbody chuckled and forbade him.

"Leave him alone," he said. "He is an obstinate little man, and he won't thank you for disturbing him. He will come when he is ready and make you a thousand polite apologies and explanations—quite untrue—for his absence."

"You seem to allow him a good deal of freedom in his proceedings," remarked Martin.

"I do," replied the Colonel briefly, and Stella tactfully changed the conversation.

Coffee had just made its appearance when the servant entered and whispered to his master, after which he handed a note to Colonel Fairbody.

"One of the men from the works brought it, sir," he explained. "He was given it by the other gentleman, who told him to fetch it here and have it given to you at once, sir."

The Colonel, with a word of apology to Stella, tore open the envelope, which Martin, from his seat, recognized as having been taken from the writing-table in his room. Silently, the Assistant Commissioner read the following message, hastily scrawled on half a sheet of paper:

"Come at once to Martin's room. Bring long light ladder, or rope-ladder if possible. Also electric torch and flask brandy. Bring Carfax, and Martin; not Stella.—PRY."

The Colonel handed the paper to Mr. Carfax, and rose.

"I am sure you will forgive us, Miss Carfax," he said, "if we run away now. Time is getting on, and—"

"And you have had a message from Mr. Pry which you don't want to tell me about yet," cut in the girl, smiling.

"Well—" began the Colonel in some embarrassment, but she laughed a little, waved her hand, and left the room.

"Now that," remarked the Colonel, "is what I call a sensible girl. She must be wild with curiosity, but she doesn't show it."

"She's a good girl," said Mr. Carfax. "But Fairbody, this looks important. As it happens, I know where to lay my hands on the ladder and a torch without attracting attention, and we can take that small decanter of brandy with us."

It was but a few minutes' work to procure a long rope-ladder from a small store not far off. The storeman had gone to his dinner, but Martin had a master key which gained them admittance. A torch was also procured, and the three men hurried to Martin's room.

They found Paul sitting in Martin's big chair, deep in thought. He sprang up as they entered, however, and spoke quickly.

"Ah," he said; "you have got the ladder. Good. Forgive me, Colonel, for sending you such a peremptory mes-

sage, but if I am right, we ought not to delay. If I am wrong—but that can wait. First, I want to ask Mr. Martin some questions."

He turned to the young man.

"When did you last see Vayne?" he asked. "I know you have told us that already, but I want to arrive at a certain point, so forgive me if I seem to waste time."

"I saw him about an hour before the incident with Stella—Miss Carfax," replied Martin readily.

"Can you remember what took place between you?"

"Easily, for it was only a few words. He told me he had got hold of a new gramophone record—that is, one I had not already got, and would put it in my room for me. I thanked him and said I would try it when I returned. I was going to make an inspection of the works."

"That was a lengthy job?"

"About two hours, roughly."

"He was friendly to you?"

"Of course; we were on excellent terms."

"Now, another point: where did you get that large vase that stands on the pedestal over there?"

"Vayne gave it to me. He found it in the ruins. He was very fond of pottering about in the bowels of the earth—there are huge old cellars here, you know, some of which we use for storing dangerous chemicals. I am rather fond of china, and he laughingly told me to add it to my collection, thinking it was rubbish. But, oddly enough, he happened to describe the thing to some friend who is an expert, and the friend told him it was probably a rather good piece of antique stuff. Of course, I asked him to take it back when he told me, but he refused, and we had the pedestal made by one of the carpenters here, so that it would not be within reach of the cleaners, and get broken accidentally."

Paul Pry's eyes gleamed.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "I am going to test a theory. If it is correct, we shall solve the mystery of Roland Vayne's disappearance. Please stay where you—"

Crossing the room, he approached the gramophone, adjusted the needle and started the clockwork. In a moment the strains of that beautiful selection from Puccini's *Madam Butterfly*, "One Fine Day," flooded the room with exquisite melody. The audience waited eagerly for the next step in this strange drama. As the last notes rang out three of them gave a cry of surprise.

Directly in front of the gramophone, where Paul had been standing a moment before, a square section of the iron floor swung silently downward, disclosing a dark hole. A few seconds later, as the music ended, the iron plate rose again, but before it could close Paul had sprung forward and thrust it downward again with a stout stick, which he wedged against the next iron plate in such a manner as to prevent the swinging plate from closing again.

"The ladder, Colonel, please," he said. "I think we are going to find Roland Vayne."

THE rope-ladder, some fifty feet long, was lowered into the opening, the top being secured by a strong iron bar, and Paul, taking the torch in his hand, descended slowly. In a few seconds his voice was heard, calling the others to descend. One by one, they entered the square hole and climbed down some thirty rungs of the ladder.

They found themselves in a stone-floored cellar, from which a passage led away into the darkness. Near the foot of the ladder stood Paul Pry, beside a shapeless object. As he turned in its direction, the light of the torch which he had held upward to guide their descent, the three men saw a huddled body lying on the stones.

It was the body of Roland Vayne.

There, in that silent cell, in the solemn presence of Death, Paul Pry told, in words that were the more moving for their modest simplicity, how he had reconstructed the tragedy in which the young electrician had played so terrible a part.

"When you left me in Vayne's room," he said, "I had already formed a shadowy theory. It is now impossible to say whether I am right or wrong in all my conclusions, but the body beside which we are standing is the final piece of evidence which seems to support what must be a partly speculative line of deduction. I looked through Vayne's papers, and was not surprised to find a plan of the old priory on which, as I had already learned, these works were built up.

"I knew that Vayne had been an unsuccessful suitor for Miss Carfax's hand; that Martin had won the prize that Vayne had not been able to secure; and that Vayne was aware of the fact. I knew, also, that Vayne was a skilled electrician, had a sound knowledge of mechanics, and had access to any part of the works when he chose.

"Colonel Fairbody will tell you that many crimes which seem bizarre are not in reality in the least extraordinary; it is not that local circumstances combine to assist the criminal, but the criminal who naturally makes use of local circumstances to assist him in the commission of his crime.

"So in this case. I fear there is not much doubt that Vayne attempted to commit a crime, but in the end Providence frustrated his efforts.

"Vayne was confronted with two problems: first, to get rid of a man who stood in the way of his love and who, it is not unlikely, he considered a dangerous professional rival, for I have reason to suspect that he himself had ambitions apart from his immediate work, and was deeply engaged in studying chemistry."

"That is so," murmured Mr. Carfax.

Paul bowed.

"Vayne's second problem," he continued, "was to get rid of John Martin in such a way that no suspicion would rest on himself. His plan was certainly an ingenious one, but some whimsical streak in the man made him elaborate it so curiously that its very ingenuity made me suspect the truth.

"This is not a fitting time or place to detail at length the steps I took: I prefer, rather, to mention only such points as are material to the story. Vayne was aware, as most people are, that certain articles vibrate in varying degrees in sympathy with certain notes of music. He obtained, probably after a careful search, the large vase which stands in Martin's room, and which he had found to vibrate very considerably in response to the note of B flat.

"When the vase had been installed for a sufficient time to be half forgotten, he attached to it two tiny wires so arranged as to form a make-and-break contact, if I describe it correctly, on the vibration of the vase. That vibration was considerably more than the mere thousandth part of an inch which is actually sufficient to make an electrical connection. These wires led through the wooden pedestal and through the floor. Now, we have heard that Vayne was very found of exploring the cellars of this place, and had pretended to find the vase in one of them. I hope to show you that in his explorations he discovered that the whole of this building has been erected directly over a long excavation which communicated by a narrow passage with cellars quite a long way off.

"The scheme now becomes clear: Vayne during Martin's absence, easily removed a plate from the iron floor in Martin's room, immediately in front of the gramophone—the spot at which a person would naturally stand while ad-

justing the needle or removing the record. He was certainly an ingenious craftsman, for he fitted a strong hinge to one end of the iron plate, and a spring lock to the other end, with a powerful spring underneath the plate. These he connected with a small electric battery which he concealed in his own room. Briefly, the effect of these arrangements was that Vayne could turn a switch in his room and electrify the wires in the vase, which released, when they made a contact through the vibration of the vase, the lock holding the iron floor plate in position.

"When the music ceased the vibration subsided, and the spring then replaced the iron plate, which was held in position by the spring lock. Meanwhile, the person standing on the plate at the time was thrown down to this stone floor. If death was not immediate—as in Vayne's case, for he has broken his neck—it was almost certain that severe injuries would result, and the victim would, unable to move, die of hunger and thirst.

"So far I have shown you Vayne as a clever and cold-blooded scoundrel; let me now show you a redeeming feature in his character.

"When he knew that Martin was about to go out for some considerable time, he told him of the record he had got. Knowing Martin's fondness for music, he forsaw that when his colleague returned to his room he would probably try the record at once. If not, he would certainly do so after dinner, when he came back. He slipped into Martin's room and placed the record on the gramophone, and returned to his own room, where he turned the switch controlling the current.

"All was now prepared. The record was an excellent one, as you heard, and had the peculiarity Vayne needed: it concluded with a fortissimo B flat. That note was the note which produced the greatest vibration in the vase.

"Vayne probably intended to leave his room and go to a distant part of the works in order to have a convincing alibi in the unlikely event of his being suspected of complicity in Martin's disappearance, but before he could do so he was amazed to hear the sound of the gramophone in Martin's room. After hesitating for some moments, as I calculate, he stole along the corridor and peeped in. To his horror, he saw Miss Carfax standing in front of the instrument, ready to lift the needle as soon as the piece of music concluded. In a flash he saw what had happened, and at the same time he realized that there was no time for explanations. I think he must have known that he could not himself escape a terrible death if he were to save the girl, and perhaps in that moment the awfulness of the crime he had contemplated came home to him.

"Without hesitation, he sprang across the room and hurled Miss Carfax away from the fatal spot; when she recovered, he had met the fate he had designed for her lover."

He paused, and for some moments there was a dead silence.

Then John Martin took the torch from Paul's hand and threw its beam on the white face of the dead man.

"God forgive him!" he said huskily.

The four men silently climbed the ladder and went out into the sunshine of a living world.

World-Famed "Blue Man" Dies

FRED WALTERS, whose bright blue skin made him a sumptuous living for many years as a "freak," died in Bellevue hospital, New York, the other day from heart disease.

Physicians at the institution made a careful examination of Walters' body and discovered to their amazement that not only his skin, but all his organs and tissues, including brain, heart and muscles, were of the same brilliant color.

The coloring, according to doctors, was due to argyria and chronic silver poisoning. Some forty years ago Walter is said to have worked in a silver mine in Australia. If the report is correct it is probable that while at the mine Walters breathed into his body nitrate of silver, which turned him blue.

Walters is survived by his widow and a six-year-old daughter. He was an officer in the Seventeenth regiment, Duke of Cambridge's own Lancers, and saw extensive service in India. In maneuvers he was thrown and his horse fell on him. A theory expressed by European scientists was that this fall was responsible for his coloring. Prof. Verscher, of Berlin, after a thorough examination, said he believed the coloring was caused by the opening of a small valve in the heart, caused by the shock when the horse fell on Walters' chest. The valve known as the foramen overale was said to be damaged so that the circulation of blood was impeded and the venous blood mixed with the arterial.

An Exceptional Ghost Story
By the Author of "Beyond the Door"

Prisoners of the Dead

By PAUL SUTER

I

OLD JOHN BAMBER turned in his arm chair before the fire, and looked steadily at his nephew. Death was in his face.

The effort required to keep his head from drooping betrayed itself in the sag of his mouth, the tense quivering of his thin neck. But the indomitable pride of mastery showed in him, too; he made no compromise with weakness. The cruel beak that was his nose—sharp as a knife-blade—still dominated his features. His voice, a little tremulous, still grated harshly.

"You may beg my consent till you rot," he said, in his dry cackle. "You won't get it."

Young John took an impulsive step which brought him from the soft, brown shadows of the vast room into the fire's dancing radiance.

"I'm afraid I can't take no for an answer, uncle—" he began, firmly.

But his words trailed off, at the look in the terrible old man's eyes. Old John seemed to be possessed suddenly of unnatural strength. He rose, totteringly, to his feet. With extended arm and a yellow bird's claw of a hand, he pointed at his nephew. The flames from the fireplace lent a false glitter to his glazing eyes, and painted the front of his dressing-gown red; but they were powerless to color his face, or his livid arm, where the loose sleeve fell back and left it exposed. The younger man trembled in spite of himself at that ghastly figure, so defiant of the shadows that were pressing upon it, and yet so soon to be one with them.

The mood passed quickly. The old man sank again into his chair. He half-smiled, musingly, with something of cunning calculation in the smile. When he spoke, his weak, almost whispering tones were wheedling rather than harsh.

"You wouldn't kill your old uncle before his time, boy?"

The effect of that changed attitude was electric. Young John's defiance was gone, like a flame puffed out. This was his uncle, who had given him a home since boyhood—his only living relative. He sank down on the floor at the old man's knees.

"You needn't answer, my boy. I know you would not. I've no wish to be hard on you. Just a promise—a little promise. You'll give the old man that?"

"Anything I can, uncle," young John returned, rather doubtfully.

"You can. It won't mean much to you—you will know why without my saying it. You are to promise to have nothing to do with her—nothing, you understand—as long as I am in the house."

The young man started. The words he was listening to, though so weak as to be barely audible, were spoken with apparent deliberation. Yet, obviously, they could mean very little. The end could not be far away. Had not the doctor said—

The aged invalid, smiling sardonically, seemed to read his nephew's thoughts. He raised a thin hand in ironic admonition.

"There are no strings to it, my boy. That's the promise. It is all I ask of you."

"I promise!" young John exclaimed.

The old man nodded, with satisfaction.

"Though it isn't much to promise, I wish it to be binding," he continued. "Will you raise your right hand?"

"You don't rely on my word?"

"A dying man's fancy," soothed the uncle, with a weak chuckle.

Young John raised his right hand.

"Now go!"

The mandate came with unexpected force. Young John Bamber's instinct was to remain; but he could not stand out against his uncle's will. Even while death waited in the shadows, old John remained master of his house.

Young John obeyed. As he opened the door to step into the dark hall, he glanced back and saw the quivering figure sitting in the chair; the face, with its high-arched nose, bent inflexibly toward him; the eyes still returning his gaze.

At the foot of the stairs the young man met Mrs. Murdock, the gaunt Scotch housekeeper.

"How is he?" she inquired, in a whisper.

"You had better go up," he replied.

On instinct, he waited, there at the foot of the stairs; and instinct was right. She had hardly vanished ino the shadowy upper room when her tall figure reappeared at the door. In the light which flickered up the stairs from the gas lamp in the lower hall, he could see her hands opening and closing spasmodically—her only symptom of excitement.

"Please come, Mr. Bamber," she requested, quietly.

From her tone, and her vibrating hands, he knew what he should find: his uncle, dead in the chair; the face, with its hawk nose, sunk on the breast; the firelight still playing ruddily upon him.

Young John Bamber thought of the solemn oath he had just taken, and of how it now meant nothing.

II

THE bleak afternoon which saw old John Bamber laid out in his library should have been dark; but in that steel town the cloudy days, when smoke and storm-wrack hid the sun, were brighter than much of the sunshiny weather. It was lurid, flickering brightness.

The red flame of the converter, bursting into the sky, shed its glow across main thoroughfares and back alleys, and pried into many darkened places. It peered through the leaded panes of the small window above the bookcase, and so entered the gloomy library where old John lay in his coffin. This library was under his former apartment. In that room the converter's light had caught him many a time, sitting in his arm-chair. Now it played about his knife-blade nose, softened his grim mouth, but failed utterly to redden his livid face as he lay there.

It was not much of a funeral. The minister and the undertaker came, since to them it was another job of work. Young John and Mrs. Murdock were present as a matter of course.

One other was there—little Jarvins, the sculptor, with his crinkled white beard, hunched shoulders, and furtive, squinting eyes. He had been the nearest approach to a friend old John Bamber had had in his later years. They had played backgammon and chess together. Usually, their evenings had ended in a quarrel, Jarvins slamming out of the house with a snarl and a promise never to return; but he always had returned. He had a better right than most to be at the funeral; better far than any of the neighbors, who had kept away from the churlish old man in his life time, and who now, fittingly, contented themselves with watching and commenting from their porches, as young John, with the undertaker and two of the drivers, slid the coffin into the hearse.

It was a mean funeral, indeed, and soon over. From it young John returned to the rambling house, occupied now by the housekeeper and the shadows.

The one to whom his thoughts chiefly turned had not been at those last rites. She had had no place there. Now, her time was come. Until the funeral was done, he had refrained from visiting Mary Lane. She would know why: she understood the unreasoning hatred that had been in old John Bamber's mind, engendered by a petty quarrel of years ago with her father.

In his own room on the lower floor, the young man carefully parted over again his straight, dark hair—already precisely in order without any such attention; donned a fresh collar, though the one he had been wearing was fairly immaculate; employed meticulous fingers before the mirror to fit himself in every respect for Mary Lane's company. He might have seen a handsome, though pale countenance, and square shoulders in that mirror; instead, his thoughts dwelt on a petite, dainty girl, with blue eyes, whose curling hair was adorned rather than hidden by a nurse's white cap.

What was it that impelled John Bamber to go up for a moment to his uncle's room, before he visited Mary Lane? He had no business there. Nothing of his had been left behind in that vacant room. He might more naturally have donned his overcoat and walked from the house, with the quick stride that would have carried him to the place that was in his thoughts. Instead, he slowly mounted the stairs, in the yellow glare of the gas light in the hallway, and, seeing the door of that room ajar, pushed it farther open. The red glow of the converter was shining in through the far window.

He stopped at the threshold, and stared for one incredulous moment; then, with a terrible cry, and hands before his face, started back. His foot tripped on the top stair. He fell headlong to the bottom, and lay still.

III

ON THE third day, the raving, gibbering mouth was quiet; the staring eyes closed; young John Bamber slept—not the troubled, fiercely interrupted sleep of delirium, but the healthy sleep of a tired man.

The slender girl, whose pretty face beneath her white cap was weary almost to

exhaustion, lay back limply in her chair and smiled.

"He is out of danger now, Miss Lane. Go home and rest. You can't have had a night's sleep in the last three days."

She looked up into the doctor's bearded face, and shook her head.

"I can carry on, doctor."

"It isn't necessary. Let Mrs. Murdock take your place tonight."

But she was cheerfully obstinate.

"Are you sure she could, doctor?" she demanded, archly; then, without awaiting his answer: "I'll stretch out on the sofa. If he even turns in his sleep, it will wake me."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and let it go at that. He had learned, in the past three days, that this quiet young woman, who had heard of John's illness and had come to take charge in her professional capacity of his sick room, had a will of iron where his welfare was concerned. Her authority had been unquestioned since the first day, when she had come out victor in a battle of wills with Mrs. Murdock. On the second day, Jarvins had dropped in. She had accepted the flowers he had brought her patient, but had excluded him from the room. As long as John continued in delirium, she preferred to let no one hear his ravings but the doctor and herself.

It had been strange delirium. More than once, Mary Lane had caught her breath at something that came from her patient's wild lips, and had shrunk away from him almost in terror. Once, when the doctor had been there to hear, she had broken down for a moment, and had cried, shudderingly:

"What does it mean, doctor?"

But he had shaken his head, with one large hand on her shoulder to steady her.

"Nothing at all. When he returns to his senses, he'll forget all about it. We must not take delirium seriously."

She had had to be content with that. Yet, pondering those delirious words, she had stolen away up the stairs, to peer into the vast room which had been old John Bamber's. She had seen gaunt Mrs. Murdock in there, dusting—that was all; that, and the vacant arm chair before the fireplace.

And now she slept, the sleep of youth and exhaustion. Impossible to wake her, it seemed; impossible, unless some sound came from her patient. But he also slept.

Somewhere, in the rambling, darkened house in that night, was the sound of shuffling footsteps; but these did not arouse the sleepers. . . .

She sprang up. Her name had been called. It was daylight.

John Bamber, bolt upright in his bed, was pointing a finger at her and shaking with emotion. Though his eyes burned with excitement, he was not delirious.

"Mary! You must go home. You mustn't stay here another minute," he commanded, hoarsely.

She took his outstretched hand between both of hers.

"Why, John?"

"I can't tell you why. You must go."

She suspected that a little of the delirium still lingered; so she glanced at the clock on the mantel, and sparred for time.

"It's only six o'clock," she told him. "Mrs. Murdock may not be up yet, to take my place. You have been very ill, John. I've nursed you."

He looked at her with feverish eyes that seemed to read her mind.

"I've been out of my head. What did I say?"

"Nothing of any importance." She kissed him. "Lie down again, dear. The doctor said he would be here early."

To her astonishment, he obeyed.

"You think I am still delirious," he said, more calmly. "I am not. Do you know why I ask you to leave this house?"

"Because you are not quite yourself, John," she answered, with conviction.

He shook his head.

"I *am* myself. As long as I was not, it would have been all right. But now my honor is involved. I promised."

"What did you promise?" she asked, humoring him.

"I promised to have nothing to do with you, as long—as long as—my uncle remained in this house."

A little shiver ran through her. She remembered the words of his delirium. And now his manner, though a trifle excited, certainly was not delirious. She forced herself to speak calmly.

"You couldn't break that promise if you wished, John. Have you forgotten, dear? Your uncle is not in this house. He was buried three days ago."

For answer, he sprang out of bed and grasped her by the shoulders.

"Go!" he screamed. "I can't explain. I *mustn't* explain. Go, for God's sake, before—before—"

He broke off suddenly and burst into sobs, his face hidden in his hands. They were tumultuous, terrified sobs of weakness. The door opened, and Mrs. Murdock peered in.

Mary motioned to her, and, with bowed head, left the room and the house.

IV

A WEEK later John Bamber, recovered from the effects of his fall, sent for Mrs. Murdock. He had not communicated with Mary Lane, since her hasty leave-taking. He could not know that she had received news of him each morning from the housekeeper at the front door, then had quietly gone again.

"Sit down, Mrs. Murdock."

She complied, perching on the edge of a stiff-backed chair—herself very stiff and prim and inscrutable.

He was visibly nervous. His eyes searched her face.

"Have you, by any chance, gone into my uncle's room since—since the funeral?"

"Every day, sir," she replied, composedly.

"Every day!"

"The dusting, Mr. Bamber, is something I never overlook. In a mill town, such as this, it's the one thing that has to be done. Let the other work go, I say, if one must, but not the dusting."

He nodded.

"Have you—disturbed things very much?"

"I've left everything just as it was, sir."

"The chairs?"

"Yes, sir. Even the one before the fireplace is just as I found him in it."

John Bamber seemed inclined to ask something else, but changed his mind and dismissed her with a grave "Thank you."

As she left, he tiptoed to the door and listened to her retreating footsteps. It was ironing day. She had come up from the laundry to answer his call. He followed the sound of her heavy tread until sure she had returned thither. Then he opened his own door wide, and stepped out. His face was pale. He set his lips and clenched his fists.

The sitting-room of the old-fashioned house adjoined his own apartment; then the library with its leaded window above the bookcases, through which the light of the steel works came on gloomy days; then the hall and the stairs. Young John Bamber paused at the foot of the stairs. He seemed to be listening.

When he began the ascent, it was with extreme deliberation. On each step he waited, grasping the baluster to steady himself. His eyes were steadily fixed upward on the closed door of the room at the top of the stairs.

At last, he reached the top, and there hesitated for a long interval, with his hand on the doorknob. Finally he turned the knob impetuously, and flung the door open.

V

QUIVERING and shuddering, he was back on the staircase, feeling his way down like a blind man, with his hand before his eyes, when he heard a soft knock at the front door.

The sound steadied him. Just then, perhaps, nothing else could have done so. This came from without, from the commonplace world at the other side of the door, the world of people who were dead when they were dead. His mind formulated that thought, but dared not dwell on it. He squared his shoulders, and walked firmly downstairs to answer the knock.

Old Jarvins stood at the threshold—bowed, wrinkled, his eyes gleaming with the expression of everlasting, elfish merriment which was peculiarly his. Young John drew back; he had always instinctively drawn back from Jarvins, without considering why. But the old man's kindly words shamed him into an attitude of welcome.

"Well enough to be up and around, my boy? I'm glad. You know, I promised your uncle to keep an eye on you. He had a long talk with me about you, only a few days before the end."

Once he was inside, with hat and cane deposited in their accustomed places, Jarvins bent his quizzical, uncomfortably keen eyes on the young man.

"You are not yourself, yet; and your trouble is mental, rather than physical. Am I correct?"

John Bamber nodded. He neither welcomed nor resented the suggestion.

"Then I have the right to offer my services," the old man continued.

"There is nothing that anyone can do," John returned, curtly.

"You are sure? I have had mental trouble in my time."

"Not this sort."

They were still standing. That was another of Jarvins' peculiarities; he seldom sat in a chair. Instead, he paced back and forth, incessantly, hands behind his back, hunched shoulders swinging to his stride, head sunk forward and bright eyes glancing up under veiled lids. He stopped, suddenly. His voice took on an odd pathos, which, somehow, stirred unaccustomed sympathy in John Bamber's heart.

"I've had trouble; one doesn't come to my age without it. Your uncle, too, my boy, had much in his time. And all trouble is much the same in the end. Your sort or my sort, or his—there is little difference. You will find that I can help you."

Young John met his eye; and abruptly with the desperation of a man driven to seek the most unlikely aid, his resolve was taken.

"If you will, then, you can help me at this minute, Mr. Jarvins," he said, quietly. "I have just come from the room that was my uncle's. I should like you to go there with me."

"A little thing to do!" Jarvins smiled. "Will you lead or follow?"

"I think—if you will—you may lead."

"Quite so. You don't care to explain your reasons, before we start? Perhaps I could help more intelligently if I knew."

"I don't care to explain."

Jarvins shrugged his shoulders, and, still smiling, led the way. He strode easily, without hesitation, into the hallway and up the stairs. In contrast to him, the young man, just behind, walked with long jerky steps, like one drawn onward against his will.

The door at the head of the stairs was half open. Jarvins pushed it wide, and stepped into the room. There he turned, with an expression of inquiry.

Young John stopped at the threshold. He was breathing heavily.

"How can I serve you now?" the old man inquired.

His companion spoke, in a thick, unnatural voice.

"Tell me what you see."

"What I see?" Jarvins pivoted on his heel, and swept the place with his glance. "I see—the room; it has never had much furniture, but what there was is still here. It seems you are making no changes—very properly, my boy, I should say. There is the little bookcase with his favorite volumes; the chess board on the table; his chair before the fireplace. Notice how the light of the converter shines on the fireplace! You would almost swear a fire was in it!"

Young John interrupted him, in a loud, harsh voice:

"You see nothing else?"

"The furniture—?"

"Damn the furniture. There—*there in the chair!*"

With raised eyebrows, Jarvins walked to the chair and looked at it, narrowly. He turned about, inquiringly.

"There is nothing in the chair, my boy, What—?"

But, with a sharp cry, young John Bamber turned and fled down the stairs. Hunted by something invisible, he ran through the hall, the library, the sitting-room and so to his own apartment. He slammed the door behind him, and flung himself, sobbing, face downward across the bed.

VI

WHILE he lay there, with the thickness of night descending around him, John Bamber was conscious that someone rapped at his locked door. Following the knock, he heard Jarvins' voice calling, offering help. He remained silent, and at last Jarvins left. The heavy front door slammed behind him.

Later Mrs. Murdock tapped and inquired whether he wanted anything. He replied with a curt negative, and she bade him good-night.

The night wore on. He sat on the edge of his bed, not caring to undress. The lurid flare of the converter slanted across the foot of the bed, and just touched, at its bottom, the door that led into the sitting-room—the door at which Jarvins and Mrs. Murdock had knocked.

Calmness coming wih the long vigil, John Bamber reasoned with himself. In most matters he was prosaic and matter-of-fact; not, he felt, easily unbalanced; certainly not superstitious. When he had taken the oath at his uncle's knee, he had had no thought but that it was an obligation he would be rid of soon. That night, death had come; then he had been sure of his deliverance. Now he was not so sure.

He would not admit squarely to himself what it was that he had seen. To do so would be disastrous. His mind could not stand it. He must keep his thoughts away from what was upstairs—sitting there in the darkness. . . .

But Jarvins had not seen it; nor had Mrs. Murdock. It could not really be there. . . .

Something crackled in the wainscoting—one of the multitudinous, tiny voices of the night. He listened, acutely. The blackness seemed full of murmuring, insistent sound—the ghosts of whispers, tenuous shreds of movement. Once, he was sure he heard some distinct taps. They seemed to be on the ceiling; as if something upstairs sought to attract attention.

He laughed, suddenly, and railed at himself. Any man who sat alone at night, listening, could hear very much what he expected. He must undress and go to bed.

But he made no move to undress. Instead, he listened again. He held his breath. He tried to bend all his faculties to the intense task of concentration, so as to make no mistake.

Presently, he heard something. It was distinct and different from previous sounds. It was the soft swish of creeping footsteps.

They seemed to be in the library—shuffling steps, very slow, like something des-

perately hurt dragging itself across the floor. They would stop, then resume. Once they paused for a longer interval, as if whatever it was that crept across the floor in that blind, dumb fashion were itself listening. When they came again, John Bamber rose to his feet. Change of position might make a difference—he had been sitting too long in the one place. He must not let imagination go too far. He stood near the door, and listened again.

Then he was sure. There could be no further doubt. He heard them.

Sometimes, in moments of crisis, when reason is strained almost to the breaking point, swift, desperate action is the only hope. The overwrought mind must face its terror. If it flees, madness lies in wait.

John Bamber found the knob of the spring lock under his hand. He turned it, and opened the door. He had a terrible moment when he felt that some power on the other side of the door was suggesting the action to his soul, and forcing him to open. But there was only darkness at that side of the door; darkness in the sitting-room, and, within the library, the dull light of the converter, which threw into relief its broad entrance.

He stood at the doorway of his room, and listened. There was no sound. Yet he had the impression that something nearby was listening, too; something with gaze fixed on him; something in the darkness of the library.

The impression became more definite. His eyes, straining feverishly through the darkness, perceived a blacker portion of it, a part more palpable than the rest. There was no movement; only growing distinctness. The thing in that darker corner of the library began to assume shape.

John Bamber became aware that his feet were moving. He had taken a step toward the library. At the sheer horror of that fact, he tried to scream aloud, but his voice would not respond. He was being dragged on against his will.

It was in this room that his uncle had lain dead.

A step at a time, pulled forward by the fascination of the thing that seemed to be there, he entered. He felt that he had been traversing miles of space. Years ago, he had left the security of his own room. He was not awake; he was in a nightmare. Yet he sensed with a thrill of reality the familiar, warm atmosphere of the library, odorous of musty leather bindings and old books. His feet sank into its yielding rugs. The easy chairs, well known to his leisure, welcomed him. But there was an alien presence.

The slender path of light from the converter slanted downward, as always, through the narrow window. It was not the usual straight beam. It was broken, interrupted in its course.

Unwillingly, he took another step into the room; and, suddenly, he comprehended.

The beam of light was broken because it shone upon his uncle's coffin.

VII

"TELL me what you saw, John," urged Mary Lane.

He had called on her the next day, in the little cottage where she lived with her mother. His eyes were staring. He continually looked behind him. But slowly her quiet, soothing personality calmed his troubled spirit, until he was able, after a fashion, to return her smile.

"I guess it's madness," he said moodily. "I didn't see anything. My mind is going—that's all."

"That must be it. You loved your uncle so much that his death turned your brain."

He started, and looked at her sharply. Her face was perfectly sober. But she hastened to soften her irony.

"I don't mean that just as it sounds, John. Of course, you loved him. Still, I can't believe that his death would drive you insane."

"But I *must* be insane—or else—"

"Or else you saw something. You haven't said so, but I know. Now, be fair to me. You've come to me for advice. Tell me what it was—or what you *thought* it was."

He passed his hand slowly over his forehead. Her calmness was having its effect. He seemed a little less reluctant to discuss the cause of his nervousness.

"I can't remember how much I've told you," he began, haltingly. "Did I say that he had made me promise not to have anything to do with you, as long as he remained in the house?"

She nodded.

"I knew him to be a dying man, so I swore readily enough. Maybe I took advantage of him. Perhaps this is a judgment on me."

"Very well. We'll grant that. Now—what have you seen?"

After a moment's hesitancy, he looked squarely into her eyes; and, picking his words deliberately, he told her.

"I have seen him three times," he concluded; "once, when the shock of it made me fall downstairs; again, last night; the third time with Jarvins—who saw nothing. He was in his chair, looking into the fireplace, just as he used to sit. Last of all, I saw his coffin in the library—but it was not there this morning. I don't know how I got back to my room last night."

She caught her breath with a little gasp, but instantly steadied herself again.

"The figure in his room—was it distinct?" she suggested.

"As distinct as you are now. I saw him by the light of the converter, shining through the window."

"Did he speak to you, John?"

"No. He did not look up."

They sat facing each other. She leaned forward, and placed her hand on his arm.

"Tell me, John. Do you really think you saw him—or was it your mind?"

He hesitated; but at last answered her with deliberate words:

"I really think—I saw him."

"And you think your promise has something to do with it?"

"I believe this explains it. He intended to come back. So he made me take that oath."

"If that's so, John, you are breaking your oath now."

"I know it."

She wrinkled her brow, and slowly shook her head.

"No, I don't believe you are. He was thinking of me as your fiancée. You've come to see me today just as an adviser. And I'm going to advise you."

He waited, in silence.

"My advice is that you go up to his room again tonight. Have someone else with you—someone more in sympathy with your mind that Mr. Jarvins is. If we can solve the secret of that room, we may be able to explain the coffin you saw, too."

She went on, still working out his plan for him.

"Mrs. Murdock won't do. Mr. Jarvins failed. John, it will have to be—"

He looked up into her face. She was smiling at him.

"It will have to be—Mary Lane!"

"I can't ask you to do that."

"No—you can't. It wouldn't be the thing, at all. I am coming without being asked."

He glared at her; then betrayed the nervous tension under which he labored by a sudden and complete surrender.

"Come on, then."

But she shook her head.

"Not yet. I've always heard that the best time for—for such things—is at night. Suppose I come this evening, while Mrs. Murdock is busy in the kitchen?"

He agreed, moodily; as he would have acquiesced, just then, in almost anything of her proposing. Shortly, he left, still constrained and silent.

VIII

THE library where old John Bamber had lain was dark, save for the converter's lurid light, but no alien presence was within, when young John crossed it to answer the faint summons at the door. Her knock had been barely audible in competition with the clatter of dishes which came from the kitchen—Mrs. Murdock was a lusty housekeeper—but the young man had been waiting anxiously.

"Does Mrs. Murdock know I'm coming?" was her first question.

He shook his head.

"That's just as well."

His desire was to go straight to the intolerable task before them. He could scarcely allow himself time to take her hat and coat and hang them in the darkened hallway.

"Shall we go up?" he demanded, breathlessly.

"I think so. We can't make it any easier by putting it off."

He led the way to the rear of the hall. Unconsciously, they tiptoed, though Mrs. Murdock was noisy in the kitchen. A single gas jet, turned low, disclosed the broad stairs, rising to the door at the top. The glare of the converter, reflecting from some bookcase door in the library to right of them, shone on the lower part of the polished baluster. Mary grasped his arm.

"The door is shut, isn't it, John?" she whispered.

He nodded.

"Shall I go up and look in, while you wait down here?"

He stiffened at that; perhaps she had expected him to do so.

"I'll go," he said.

"You mean you will go by yourself?"

"Yes."

"That may be best, if you really can do it. It—whatever it is—may not show itself to me. If you feel able to open the door, I'll wait here. The instant you look in, I will come. Can you do it, John?"

"I *will* do it," he answered, slowly.

With pale face, he started up the stairs. As she waited below, in the yellow pool of gas light, her upturned countenance seemed drawn and haggard. Her eyes followed each step he took. When at last his hand was on the door knob, she could not suppress a low sob of excitement.

He turned the knob slowly, then, with a sudden jerk, wrenched the door open.

"Mary!"

She was by his side.

"Can you see him?" he demanded, almost inaudibly.

"I see your uncle," she whispered.

They both saw him.

The livid, dead figure sat in its accustomed arm chair, gazing down into the cold fireplace.

As they looked, the glare from outside flared into a weird semblance of daylight. For a moment the ghastly figure was distinct—as clear-cut and as still as the chair it sat in.

In that moment Mary uttered a little cry. Pushing past young John Bamber, she rushed across the room to the figure in the chair. She touched its livid face.

She stepped back, gasping. Then, in spite of a shudder she could not overcome, she struck the figure suddenly with all her strength.

It fell to the floor and broke into pieces!

IX

IN THE period that followed, the "spirit" of old John Bamber was exorcised in a practical way. He had not believed in such new-fangled devices as electric fixtures; now the house was wired throughout. It had been a gloomy place, with ponderous furniture and dark hangings on the walls. Much of that was changed. Bright pictures appeared, in place of certain saturnine ancestors, done in oil. Even the converter's ghostly glare, through the windows over the bookcases, was softened by the judicious use of prism glass. At last, all was ready for the wedding.

For that occasion, young John Bamber hired the best firm of decorators in the town, and gave them free rein. Wherever a stair post or a chandelier was open to floral improvement, it was made to blossom. The bookcases in the erstwhile somber library had their part in an elaborate nuptial design. Even the dim light became bright. The experienced decorator knew that fresh bulbs of high candle power, suitably hidden, could perform miracles of cheer.

His masterpiece, however, had to do with the ceremony itself; for he perceived that the strategic point of the whole house was the dark corner of the library where old John Bamber had lain dead. In that corner, under a bower of roses, Mary Lane and young John were married.

Two faces were missing at the festivities. Mrs. Murdock and old Jarvins were never seen again in that house.

For the benefit of those wedding guests who did not know why, Mrs. John Bamber, flushed and smiling, seized upon a lull in the conversation to enlighten them. She wished to substitute truth for the wild rumors that had been flying about since Mrs. Murdock's dismissal. In the telling, the smile left her face, and her eyes grew stern. It was a black enough tale; the exposure of an attempt to turn a sensitive but sane man into a madman.

"What I don't understand is the motive," one of the guests confessed, when she paused in the telling. "I thought the property was entailed and had to come to John."

"Most of it was," Mary confirmed. "The rest of it was left equally to Mrs. Murdock and Mr. Jarvins—on condition. *I* was the condition."

She smiled at John, and proceeded:

"It was left to them to prevent our marriage. The money was not to come to them for five years, and then only if John had not married me. If we did marry before that, their share went to charity."

"So they tried to frighten him out of marrying you?"

"Worse than that, I think. John is sensitive and high-strung—aren't you, dear? I fear they wanted to drive him insane. They thought there was a good chance to turn his mind, if they went about it the right way."

Young John, standing near, nodded emphatic confirmation.

"There was. And the fact that I had been too ill to hear the will read played right into their hands. They were clever."

"Very clever." Mary took up the tale again. "Mr. Jarvins is a fine sculptor, you know, and he and old Mr. Bamber were close friends. The figure was modeled without John's knowledge, of course—that was easy enough to do. Perhaps Mr. Bamber knew how it was to be used, but we'll hope not."

"And the housekeeper put it into the room and took it out again?" another guest surmised.

Mary nodded.

"It wasn't heavy—wax is light. And she may not have moved it any farther than the room across the hall. They counted on John's staying away from upstairs most of the time, since his own room is on the first floor. It really was a clever plan—and yet—"

She wrinkled her brows.

"And yet, they must have feared it would fail, or surely they would never have gone to the trouble of getting a cof-

(Continued on page 84)

Here's a Compelling Tale

The Death Pit

A Novelette of Grim Tragedy

By OSCAR SCHISGALL

CHAPTER ONE

OUT OF THE STORM

A SPLOTCH of yellow light fell from the oil lamp to the flushed face of the boy. He writhed on the creaking bed and moaned, while his features were distorted by the agony of fever. His eyes were fiercely closed. One shivering hand grasped the edge of the covers. And from his blistered lips came the harsh query:

"Where's Pop? Where is he?"

The sallow woman, sitting at the bedside, glanced around nervously. She hesitated; then her bony hand reached toward the boy's forehead and touched it with a soothing caress. She bent forward until her haggard face hung under the sickly light, until her thin, straggling hair dully reflected the yellow glow. Anguish lurked in her weary eyes as she gazed upon the boy, and she shook her head pityingly.

"Where's Pop?" he repeated, raising his voice.

His eyes opened and he stared at her, as though he dared the woman to answer. Desperately she tried to smile, but there was no mirth on the bony countenance.

"He'll be home soon, Gil. He'll come—soon."

"Where is he? I want him!"

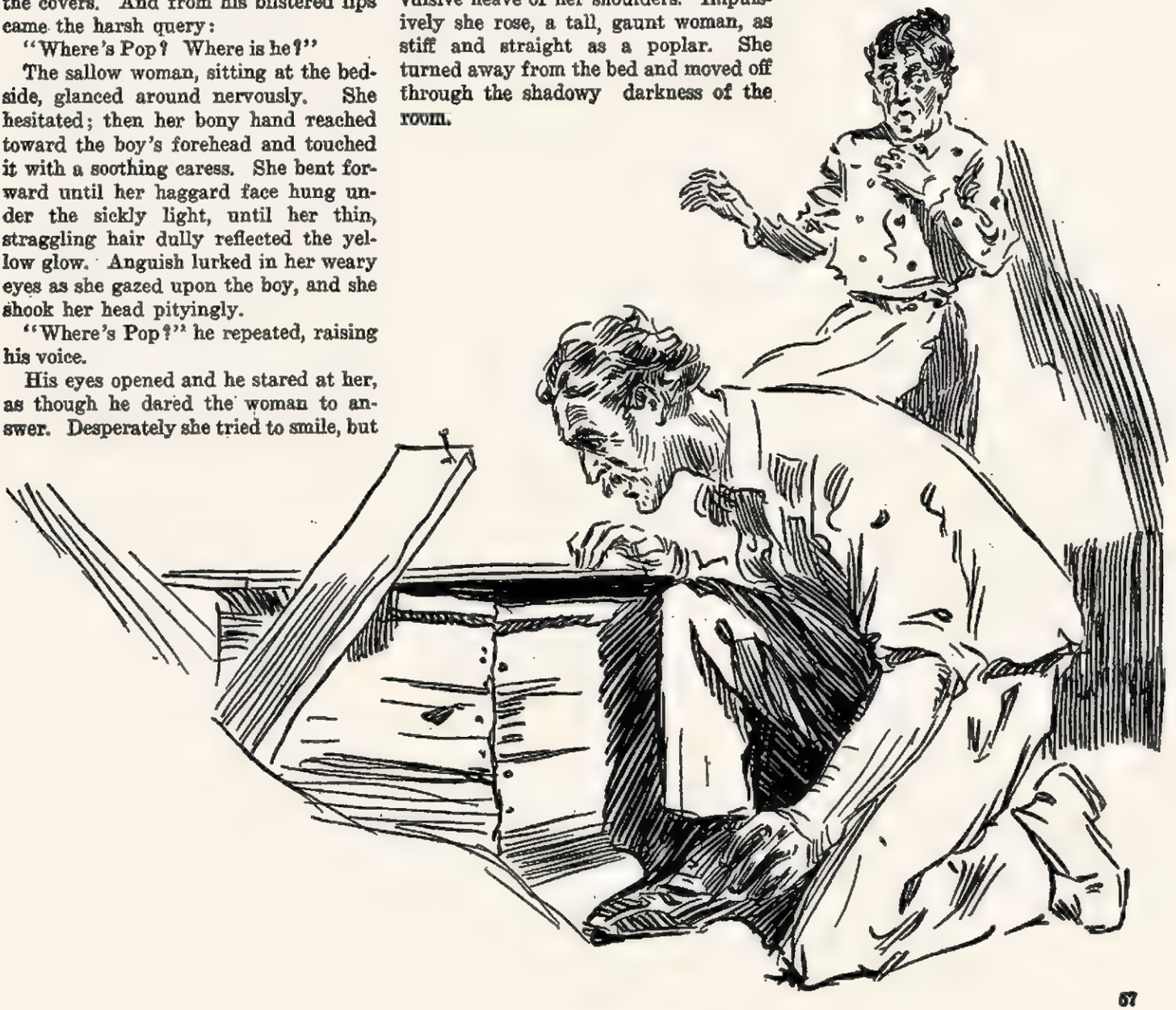
"In a few minutes—"

"I want him! Call him, Mom. Why don't you call him?"

Her tightly pressed lips forced back a sob, but she could not conceal the convulsive heave of her shoulders. Impulsively she rose, a tall, gaunt woman, as stiff and straight as a poplar. She turned away from the bed and moved off through the shadowy darkness of the room.

Her clothes, heavy and voluminous, hung about her with ungainly looseness; her hair was neglected, so that some of it strayed over her listless face. She brushed it away and went to the window.

Rain pattered against the pane. Through the blackness outside a steady wind sent its weird ululations.



The woman shuddered. Somewhere in that miserable night was her husband. She did not know where. Peering through the streaming window, she could discern a lonely light far down the road—but that was all; no sign of her husband.

It was almost midnight. He should have been home hours ago. But—well, it wouldn't help to worry about Timothy Cruze. Most probably he was in the village, as usual, wasting his time with the shiftless crowd at the store.

A sneer twisted the woman's mouth as she walked back to the bed. She looked about the room—a pauper's room furnished with a few broken chairs; a table which groaned with every weight placed upon it; an old-fashioned closet which might have retained a semblance of dignity, had it been standing on four legs instead of three. And now, to make the poverty of the home even more keenly felt, two beds had been brought into the chamber.

Those beds had been on the upper floor through the summer; but now, with cold weather imminent, they had been carried down. It was foolish, Timothy explained, to heat two floors when the family could sleep downstairs. He had said "foolish." What he actually meant was "impossible." The Cruzes could not afford enough fuel for a whole house.

A peculiar little laugh escaped the woman as she viewed the dismal chamber, large and square. The glow of the lamp near her son's bed served but to accentuate the bleakness of the other corners.

Again she sat by the boy and stroked his forehead. She watched him writhe for a few moments, then said:

"You ought to have a doctor, Gil. Soon as Pop comes home we'll send for—"

"Where's Pop?" The boy caught her hand in a frenzied, trembling grip. Deliriously he repeated, "Where's Pop? Where is he? I want him!"

"I don't know where he is, son. I never know—"

"Call him. Oh, Mom, *please* call him!"

The plaintive wail in his voice tortured her. She looked away—only to be mocked by the persistent splash of rain on the window. If only Timothy would come, it would be so much easier to sit with the fevered boy!

But another hour dragged by before Timothy Cruze came home. She did not hear him as he approached the house. The wind drowned the sound of his steps sloughing through the mud.

Her long, bony fingers were lengthening the flickering wick of the lamp when she felt a gust of wind on her back. She looked around.

Leaning against the closed door, her husband stood panting. Water dripped from his uncouth clothes, from his face, from his hands. He drew the soaked cap from his head and tossed it to a chair.

And then she saw that he was smiling—a strange, malicious smile—a smile of triumph—almost a leer. His huge head was lowered as he began to pull off the baggy coat. In the dim luminosity of the oil lamp he appeared menacing; about him hovered an air that seemed unreal, fiendish.

"How's the kid?" he asked gruffly.

"Very bad, Tim—worse than he was this morning. Fever's awful. Where have *you* been?"

He ignored the question. Instead, he strode lumberingly across the room until he stood beside the bed. From his arms, powerful and dangling, water dripped to the covers. He studied his son's fiery face.

"Looks bad," he grunted.

"He was—delirious before."

"Delirious?" He squinted at his wife with suspicion, as if he doubted her report. "From what?"

"I don't know, Tim," she answered wearily. "He just sort of raved about—oh, about everything."

He emitted a short, guttural sound intended to express displeasure and concern.

"His face is all red," he mumbled. "Bad fever, I guess."

"Yes. Bad fever. I want you to call Dr. Philemon."

With a sudden start, Timothy Cruze turned savagely toward his wife. Even the shadows of the room could not hide the wild flames which had leapt to his narrow, swollen eyes. His chest heaved as he lowered his head close to her straggling hair.

"Forget Philemon!" he commanded, his voice strangely subdued.

In surprise she looked up. Crazy shadows played across her features as she demanded:

"What do you mean, 'forget' him? We need him. The boy needs him. I want you to go down to Drake's place where you can telephone."

"No! We ain't going to get the doctor."

"Ain't going to get him?" Exasperation sprang into her tones, and she scowled. "You're talking like a fool, Tim. We've *got* to get him. Just look at Gil. Who knows what's wrong with the boy?"

Tim raised his huge shoulders in a stubborn shrug.

"I ain't going to call Philemon tonight—nothing doing."

Indignant and angered, the woman jumped up, faced him. She shook a finger under his nose and declared:

"Look here, Tim Cruze, I stand for a lot from you. But I ain't going to let the boy suffer on account of your thick-headedness. If you don't go out and get the doctor, I'll do it myself!"

A queer smile appeared on his heavy lips—the same malicious smile he had displayed when he entered the house.

"None of us is going to call the doctor tonight. He's too excited to come out here in this weather."

"Why?" She shot the word at him as a challenge.

"'Cause—'cause I just came from the doctor's house!"

She frowned questioningly.

"You—just came from—the doctor's?"

"Yes."

"What for—what were you doing there?"

He laughed—harshly, curtly. His hand fell into his pocket, and from it he drew, with great deliberation, a glittering brooch and a studded wrist-watch. From another pocket he extracted a thin packet of bills—ten-dollar bills.

And as he held them under the radiance of the oil lamp, he continued to laugh softly.

"Look at 'em," he said, exulting, "look at 'em, Agatha! Worth a couple of hundred dollars, sure!"

The woman's eyes were round as she gaped upon the jewels. Her bony hand rose to suppress a gasp. Never before had she gazed upon such glistening, such alluring wealth. A brooch—a wrist-watch—and money. . . .

"Wh-where'd you get that, Tim?" she whispered in awe.

"I just told you, didn't I, that I came from the doctor's?"

"The doctor's!" She glanced up in terror to encounter his triumphant leer. For an instant they stared into each other's eyes; then she asked hushedly, "You mean you—stole 'em?"

"Just what I did. From that toy-safe in his office."

"Oh—Tim!"

Agatha Cruze shrank from her husband. Her ungainly form receded to a corner, and out of its darkness she directed a piercing, incredulous gaze at him. He stood, tall and swaggering, a brute of a man, self-satisfaction beaming on his puffed features.

"What's the matter?" he asked tauntingly.

"How could you do a thing like that, Tim? *Steal!*"

"How?" Contemptuously he flung the jewels and the money to the table. His brows sank so that he glowered at her. "I'll tell you how. You needn't stand there like an angel looking into hell. Use your head and you'll see. We need money, don't we? What with winter coming and you wanting clothes for yourself and the kid—we need money, don't we? Sure! Have we got any of our own? No, we ain't. Stands to reason we got to get it somewhere."

"But, Tim, *stealing*—"

"Stealing is one way to get it—and I used that way. The farm didn't give us a cent this year, did it? No. Nobody around here made any money this year—nobody except the doctor. 'Cause we had rotten weather, we had sickness instead of crops. And the doctor gets his money out of our misery. Look at his wife—buying wrist-watches and brooches and diamonds and fancy dresses out of the money her husband sucks from us poor sick farmers. Is it right? It ain't! I didn't take much from him. Maybe the whole business here, including the cash, ain't worth more than five hundred. It'll tide us over the winter. What'll it mean to him—the doctor? Nothing!"

He strode ponderously to the window and glared out into the night. Trickling rivulets of rain traced their crooked courses on the pane, but he did not see them. He saw nothing. In defiance he was awaiting his wife's answer.

Agatha Cruze was eying the fortune on the table. Queer thoughts raced through her brain—new thoughts—fearful thoughts. If those things could be sold for five hundred dollars, it would mean a comfortable winter, proper attention to Gilbert, her suffering son. She glanced at the boy; he was leaning on one elbow, his eyes feasting themselves upon the display of wealth on the table.

"Put your head down on the pillow, Gil!" she ordered; and he obeyed unexpectedly laughing with a wild joy.

"We're rich now, ain't we, Mom?" he cried deliriously.

She offered no reply. She considered rapidly. Then her low voice called:

"Tim!"

Slowly the man looked around.

"Were you—seen? Anybody know you did it?"

"No!" he snapped brusquely. "Think I'm a fool? Of course nobody knows—excepting you and the kid. And *you* ain't going to tell."

"Then—then as long as nobody knows, why don't you want to call the doctor?"

"Call him!" He appeared amazed. His feet astride, he remained silent for an instant. He had expected his wife to preach a sermon on the evils of theft. Instead, she was still thinking of summoning the physician for Gilbert.

"Yes," she said quietly. "The boy needs him. He—he'll get worse, maybe, if we don't call—"

"But, Agatha; do you want me to tempt the fates and everything by calling the doctor right after I—I've robbed him? He'll be so excited over finding his safe open that he won't want to come, anyway. Call him!"

"A doctor always comes, Tim."

"But—but—" An inexplicable cowardice was gripping him. He did not wish to face the man whose home he had robbed; he was afraid of something intangible. "Say, Agatha, use your head. It's after midnight and it's raining cats and dogs. Dr. Philemon lives four miles from here. Why make him come out on a night like this?"

"Gil needs him," she insisted, calmly obdurate.

"Gil can wait till tomorrow!"

"He can't—I won't let him. The boy's terribly sick. He gets a doctor tonight."

"But four miles!"

"You don't have to walk it. Go down the road to Drake's—that's only one mile. They'll let you telephone."

"Aw, look at that rain!" he objected.

"Tim, if you don't go, I will! You fool, don't you see the boy needs a doctor? He's as red as fire. Who knows what's wrong with him?"

"Still—"

"Still nothing!" she ejaculated, spitting the words at him. "You're afraid to meet the doctor, that's what. But I ain't! What's to prevent our hiding the things you took from him? What's to prevent our putting them where the doctor won't see 'em when he comes? They don't have to be on the table all night!"

The realization that his wife was not condemning his theft, that she was actually making of herself an accomplice, stirred a peculiar emotion in Timothy Cruze. It is soothing to have one's sins shared by others. He experienced a surge of courage. He moved forward hesitantly.

"You don't mean, Agatha—"

"I don't mean anything except that we need the doctor. And if you ain't going right now to 'phone him, I'll go myself!"

"And the brooch and the money and the watch—what—"

"Hide 'em in the closet. He'll never guess you got 'em here, will he? He ain't a mind reader. Besides—" she paused thoughtfuly.

"What?" he urged.

"Oh, even if somebody saw you there—or *thought* they saw you—or somebody like you—I'm just supposing, Tim—then your calling the doctor here would sort of—sort of kill supicion, see?"

Timothy Cruze did "see." A shrewd appreciation of his wife manifested itself in a comprehending smile as he nodded.

"You're right, Agatha."

"Are you going to call the doctor?" she demanded.

He lifted his drenched coat from a chair.

"All right," he agreed. "I'll walk down to Drake's. And you—you hide the things, Agatha."

And from the bed of Gilbert came a hysterical wail:

"Hide 'em in the closet, Mom, hide 'em in the closet! We're rich now, ain't we?"

The boy ended his question with a hysterical, shrill laugh. . . .

CHAPTER TWO

DR. PHILEMON CALLS

IT WAS after two o'clock in the morning when Dr. Philemon, huddled under the leaking top of his buggy, drove up to the rickety porch of the Cruze house.

He stepped awkwardly to the ground and muttered an oath as his feet sank into deep mud. Carefully he moved to the head of the horse; he tied the rein to one of the square beams which supported the roof of the porch.

The rain splashed upon him, upon the mud-spattered animal. He felt a stream of water run down his sleeve as he fastened the rein, and he grumbled audibly. But his protest ceased when he heard the moans of Gilbert Cruze, distinct above the noise of the wind.

Agatha opened the door for the doctor, and he eyed her angular being with mingled pity and contempt. These poverty-stricken farmers who lacked energy to earn a living from a source other than the soil disgusted him. They were worse, he firmly believed, than Russian peasants.

He unwound the muffler from his throat, threw off his great, dripping coat. No longer was he looking at Agatha or at Timothy, standing in a dark corner. Now his attention was fixed on the flushed young face under the light of the oil lamp.

Still writhing, Gilbert emitted an occasional moan. He tossed about incessantly, his small hands groping upward.

"How long's he been like that?" asked Dr. Philemon, rubbing his palms for warmth. He was a big man, almost as big as Timothy himself, and he cast a long, ungainly shadow on the wall.

"Since noon;" replied Agatha, monotonously. "He's been—delirious. Talks about all sorts of things—just babbles. His fever's awful."

Dr. Philemon shook his head.

"Trouble here, trouble at home, trouble everywhere!" he chanted as he went to the bedside.

"Trouble at home?" asked Agatha, casting a quick glance to the corner in which her husband stood in attentive silence.

"Yes. The whole town will hear about it in the morning!"

"About what?"

The doctor scowled into her face. His voice became hoarse. Pounding his fist on the back of a chair, he exclaimed:

"I've been robbed, that's what—*robbed!*"

Agatha stepped back in well-simulated amazement. Her mouth hung open, her eyes were circles. Before speaking, she turned toward her husband as if to inform him of the physician's astonishing declaration. Then she gasped:

"You've been robbed?"

"Yes. Over five hundred dollars worth of stuff! Right in my home!"

"Wh-when?"

"This very night! Before I came here. Lord knows it was no easy matter to hitch up and travel through this storm—four miles—while my own wife is home, half crazy after this night. All her valuables are gone—lost. The safe broken open—it wasn't a safe; just a rotten old box anybody could break through with a—a good chisel or something. I wouldn't have come if your husband hadn't told me how sick the boy was. Let's look at him."

But Agatha was not satisfied. She wanted to hear the details of the doctor's story; she had committed herself to the task of aiding her husband in his struggle against the law—and it was well to know the enemy's information.

"When did you find out about this—this robbery, doctor?" she queried.

"When? When, your husband telephoned me, that's when. I went down to the office to answer the call, and there I saw the little safe—open. Everything—money and jewels—gone. Oh, I 'phoned everybody with authority in the village. Pulled 'em out of bed. In the morning there'll be an investigation."

From the dark corner issued Timothy's voice, resonant and deep and vibrant:

"Hope they find the thief, doctor. It'll be hard to lose that much money."

"Hard? I work for it hard enough—traveling four miles through a storm at two o'clock in the morning, and four miles home again—when my own wife is as nervous as—as—"

"Sorry," muttered Agatha, "but the boy was very sick."

And as if to vindicate her, Gilbert began to moan. His head tossed from side to side. He did not seem to notice the doctor's presence until his wrist was firmly gripped between searching fingers. Then he looked up, squinted inquiringly.

"Who are you?" he asked, almost threateningly.

"Quiet, my boy, quiet," murmured the physician, eying his watch as he felt the boy's pulse. He was forced to bend toward the lamp, and he did not see the wordless messages passing between Timothy and Agatha Cruze.

"Who are you?" repeated Gilbert.

"Sh! Quiet, boy. . . . Mrs. Cruze, can't I get better light? This flickering wick is bad for the eyes. Can't see—"

"I'm sorry," apologized Agatha. "We have no other lamp."

"Hum!"

Again Timothy's voice rumbled out of the darkness:

"Maybe I could hold a match over the watch, Dr. Philemon. The light might be better."

"Thanks, no."

The physician was frowning. So annoying a lack of household conveniences forced one to forget professional dignity. He was chilled, bad-humored; the prospect of the four-mile journey home, through the steady rain, deprived him of all cheer. He grumbled indistinctly—and suddenly stopped.

Astounded, he was gaping upon the sick Gilbert. The boy had raised himself on his elbow. He glared toward his father's corner, a wild, feverish light lending glittering brilliance to his small eyes. He coughed, gulped, then cried:

"Pop, is this the doctor? Is this Dr. Philemon?"

He did not wait for a reply; he fell back upon the pillow, laughing deliriously, and his little lips began to prattle hysterically:

"Dr. Philemon—Philemon—the doctor! We're rich now, ain't we, Pop? Ain't we, Mom? . . . Oh, we're rich! You got the doctor's money, didn't you Pop? . . . Is it wrong to steal, Pop? It ain't wrong. . . . No crops, you said, didn't you? . . She bought diamonds and fancy dresses. . . . But you got the money, didn't you, Pop? . . . From the toy-safe . . . Does the doctor know you took it? . . . Tell him! Tell him! . . . Hide the things in the closet, Mom, before the doctor comes. That's right—in the closet—on the third shelf. . . . There they are, on the shelf in the closet—a watch and something else and money. . . . We're rich now, ain't we, Pop? Ain't we, Mom? . . . "

Gilbert subsided to an incoherent drool, chattering of money and jewels and the closet. He was squirming under the covers.

But no longer did Dr. Philemon listen to the boy. He had turned; he was staring queerly into the terrified eyes of Agatha Cruze. Behind the woman stood her husband, big and menacing and glowering furiously. They were speechless.

Dr. Philemon drew in his lips, peered sidewise at the closet. Then, with unexpected vigor, he sprang across the somber room, pulled open the closet door, thrust his hand over the third shelf, and—

"So!" he cried softly. "So—*you* took it, Cruze!"

His fingers fondled the jewels. Over them his eyes gleamed in the fantastic glow of the lamp. He came very close to Timothy. His fat face was thrust forward so that his breath fell warmly upon the farmer's cheeks.

"So!" he whispered. "So! Well, I'm going to the village; and you'll be in jail before the night's over, Cruze! I'll have you in jail, or—"

Timothy's huge hands plunged forward and fastened themselves to Dr. Philemon's chest.

"You ain't going to do nothing of the kind!" tremulously declared the thief. "You ain't!"

"Oh, I ain't, ain't I?" jeered the physician. "We'll see about that. Let go of me!"

"You ain't!" insisted Timothy. His voice had sunk to a low, harsh rasp. He curtly told his wife, "Agatha, lock the door."

But Agatha did not move. She stood stupefied, unable to speak. The sudden flood of events against her, against her husband, had overwhelmed the woman. Tall, bony, erect, she gazed at the doctor. One thought charged repeatedly through her mind:

They were caught—they were caught—they were caught—

Though her eyes saw, she was not certain of what occurred during the following few minutes.

She had a vague vision of the doctor breaking from her husband's grasp; he lurched toward the door. But Timothy was behind him, pulling him back. The doctor's fist rose; thudded against a resounding chest—without effect. An answering blow—a scuffle—and the struggle began.

Two huge men they were. Timothy Cruze and Dr. Philemon, and they battled like giants. But the physician was soft of body, while the farmer was solid and muscular. Their fists flew; they collided with the table, threw it over upset chairs. They crashed against the walls, fell, rose again, pounded each other.

And on the bed the fiery-eyed boy sat up and cheered frantically:

"Hit him, Pop! Hit him! . . .Oh, that was a good one! Give him another—in the face—break his face! Another one, Pop! . . . Kill him! . . . That's the way—oh, that was fine! Right on the mouth! Oh!"

Agatha watched. There was nothing she could do—she, a woman. Nothing? Yes, there *was* something. On the floor she saw the brooch and the wrist-watch and the money. She picked them up and dropped them into the pocket of her skirt.

She had no doubt about the outcome of the fight. Her Tim would win. He always won in physical contests.

The doctor was gasping, staggering unsteadily; and still his fists answered the blows of Timothy. From his mouth a stream of blood, hideous in the yellow light, trickled over his chin. And Tim Cruze hissed between breaths:

"You ain't going to tell! I ain't going to jail! I ain't!"

And then he did a brutal thing: he poised his fist, waited, and sent it smashing with all his strength against the jaw of the doctor. That was the final blow.

Dr. Philemon uttered a choked cry. He toppled back, fell, and his head was battered against the corner of the fallen table. . . .

Very quietly he lay on the floor, while Timothy panted over him like a victorious dog, his mouth open, his chest heaving.

He waited for the doctor to stir; but the doctor did not stir. Around the head on the floor a small pool of crimson was forming, little streams groping out like the tentacles of a tiny octopus. And into the red smudge dripped the physician's hair.

Agatha stared at the appalling sight. Her eyes were dilated. The breath was imprisoned in her throat. For as she looked, a terrible dread swept over her. She wanted to scream, but could not.

Impulsively she darted forward, fell to the floor at the doctor's side. Her hands groped over his chest; they tried to find his heart, to feel its beating. She gazed at the ugly gash at the back of the head. She gazed—and suddenly started back with a little cry.

"Tim!" she gasped. "Tim—he—he's *dead!* You've killed him—*murdered him!*"

And like a fiendish echo came the voice of the sick, delirious boy:

"You killed him, Pop! You murdered the doctor! You killed him!"

CHAPTER THREE

THE WELL

THE knowledge of the horrible thing he had done left Timothy Cruze dumbstruck. Stupidly he stared from the motionless body to his wife. His mouth, smarting and swollen from the blows which had been stormed upon it, formed the word:

"Dead?"

She nodded, her expression of terror as fixed as the leer of a gargoyle. She was still kneeling beside the inanimate form, but her hand had sprung away from the silent heart.

Timothy glanced around uncertainly. His fists opened and closed. He was conscious of the bleakness of the chamber, of the incessant rain pattering on the window, of the weird light on his son's face. He shuddered, and his hands smoothed his ruffled hair.

"Dead," he repeated, as though he were endeavoring to convince himself that such a thing was possible. "He's dead—"

Slowly he moved away. He found himself beside Gilbert's bed, and he sat limply upon the chair.

The boy was watching him with curious intensity; something akin to pride covered Gilbert's countenance. Very softly he said again:

"You killed him, Pop. You did it."

Timothy's two huge hands were clasped in his lap. He murmured:

"If only you hadn't babbled, son; if only you hadn't babbled—"

"He ain't responsible, Tim," stammered Agatha, rising to her gaunt height. She stepped away from the body, meanwhile speaking. "He ain't meaning to do anything wrong. The boy's delirious—out of his head."

"I—know—" whispered Timothy Cruze. And a strange tenderness stole into his tones. "It ain't your fault, son. It's—the fever—" He did an unusual thing; he leaned forward awkwardly and kissed the burning cheeks of his son.

There were times, rare, perhaps, when Cruze forgot his swaggering bravado; then sentiment mastered him for an instant, as it was doing now. But the spell always disappeared at once. After it his love for Gilbert or for Agatha was displayed by gruffness.

Impetuously he rose, glaring at the body of Dr. Philemon.

"What are we going to do with that?" he rasped.

Agatha stood beside him; and strangely it was she who assumed control of the situation; she who had become calm and who was scheming; she who gave orders. Her tone admirably steady, she said:

"I've just been thinking of it, Tim. They'll be around in the morning—everybody—to look for him. I suppose his wife knows he came here."

"Yes, yes! What are we going to do?" A spasm of fear gripped him. His great figure shook visibly as he chattered: "They'll take me and—and then I'm done for. Murder! D'you realize what I've done, Agatha? Murder! If they get me—"

"They ain't going to get you," said his wife, with imperturbable assurance.

"They ain't?" The words quivered. "Wh-what can I do?"

"You'll do what I say, and we'll be safe."

His features shone with the inspiration of new hope. He caught her arms and whispered with terrible tenseness:

"I'll get out—away from here! It's only a little after two. Before they come in the morning I can be pretty far away—a long start. Then—"

"Tim!" She interrupted his suggestion with a sharpness that cut into him. Her lips curled back in an ugly sneer, and she pulled her arms from his grasp. "What are you saying?" she hissed. "Run away? Leave me here alone with Gil—and Gil sick? Alone with—with that thing on the floor? What are you saying, Tim?"

He gulped helplessly, understanding the cowardice of the suggestion. Avoiding her accusing gaze, he muttered:

"What else can I do? You don't want 'em to get *me*, do you?"

"No. I told you they ain't going to get you—if you listen to me. Are you quiet enough to listen now?"

He nodded, like a schoolboy being chided.

"Nobody," she said decisively, "is going to hear about this!"

"But how—"

"Listen to me, you fool! When I say nobody will know what you did, I mean it!"

"How you going to stop them from knowing? They'll see—*that*—" His shaking finger pointed at the corpse; now the little pool of blood had grown to an appallingly large smudge—and was still growing. Timothy looked away, a dreadful revulsion sickening him. But his wife was becoming steadily calmer. She went on:

"Nobody is going to see that thing. We're going to hide it."

"Hide it?"

From the bed came Gilbert's shrill repetition:

"You're going to hide the doctor, Mom!"

"Yes, hide him—hide him where no one will ever find his body!"

In his anxiety, Timothy was actually cringing before her.

"Where?" he asked tremulously.

Agatha's deep voice was lowered. Her eyes narrowed.

"In the well!" she said.

"The—well?"

"Yes, the dry well! You're going to fill the thing up with dirt, aren't you? It's no good any more."

"I know, but—"

"But nothing, Tim! That's going to be the doctor's grave, that well! We'll throw him into it tonight—now. You'll carry him out. And then we'll put the boards over it. No one will find him. After they go away—or, better, after a couple of days, we'll fill it as we were going *to* do. No one will be the wiser."

Had he found the courage to do such a thing, Timothy would have hugged his wife. Her plan was beyond reproach. The old well in the yard, long since dry, offered an ideal tomb, an ideal place of concealment. No one would search for the doctor's body there—especially after it would be filled. The well. . . .

"You're a good girl, Agatha," he murmured.

She did not answer. But from Gilbert came a gleeful exclamation:

"The well! Hide the doctor in the well, Mom! That'll be fine!"

Uneasily, Timothy glanced down at the body.

"The blood, Agatha," he stammered. "They'll see it—"

She looked at the fearful stain. Its dark crimson was joined by the yellow of the oil lamp, forming a queer, indescribable blot of color.

"Don't you worry about the blood, Tim. You take the body out to the well. I'll wash the signs away. I'll fix up the room so no one will guess. Don't worry about the stains."

She wondered, of a sudden, why she was taking all these precautions on behalf of the man who had neglected her so cruelly during the entire nine years of their married life. But she brushed aside the hesitancy. He was her husband! Gilbert was her son! For their sakes she must fight the law. She could not afford to lose Timothy; and she could not bring disgrace upon the boy. She must fight. .

Peculiar, she told herself, was the fact that she could speak so boldly of blood and a corpse and burial; she no longer suffered from the horror of the situation. Instead, her mind was coolly planning a means of escape. Funny how the mind works under a strain. . . .

Timothy interrupted her musings. Again his voice trembled with misgivings; and again he stammered weakly:

"But his wife, Agatha—she knows he came here! They're bound to suspect us!"

A contemptuous smirk twisted her full lips.

"You fool, can they prove he came here—arrived here, I mean? Suppose we insisted he didn't arrive."

"We can't! His—his horse and buggy are outside!"

Energetically Timothy sprang to the window. He stared through the streaming pane into the blackness, his nose pressed against the glass.

"Sure," he hissed. "There it is—tied to the porch!"

Agatha considered. She bent her head and frowned. That horse could not remain outside. That evidence, too, must be destroyed—*all* evidence must be destroyed. They must find a perfect alibi, a story that would convince the villagers.

For a long time she remained motionless, gazing with listless eyes at the floor—but not at that part of the floor on which the dreadful thing lay. Timothy, quaking and baffled, stood by the window. He watched her anxiously, watched her because he knew his life depended on her decision, watched her as a criminal watches the foreman of a jury.

And after many minutes she spoke—quietly, decisively.

"Very well," she said, "we'll change our story. Tim, after you get that—that thing into the well, you're going to get into that buggy and drive about half way to the doctor's house. There you can tie the horse to a tree, and walk home."

"Drive half way—say, what's the idea?"

"Just do as I say, and we'll be all right. You leave the horse half way to the doctor's house, see? Then we'll admit that he was here, that he left about half past two. They'll find the empty buggy and—well, let them wonder about the mystery of what happened to the man. He'll just sort of—disappear, see? We won't know anything about what happened to him after he left. His buggy half way home will show that he started away from us."

Again Timothy Cruze experienced a surge of admiration for his wife. He had never suspected that she could behave so sensibly, so tranquilly, under trying circumstances. But an inherent sulkiness and shyness stilled him; he did not express his thoughts.

"It's a good thing," Agatha continued, "that it's raining. Your tracks around the buggy, and from the buggy home, and around the well—they'll all be washed away."

"That's right! Never thought of that."

"You haven't thought of anything—yet," she answered, somewhat bitterly. "There's something else, too. Look in the buggy. If you can find some sort of doctor's kit—I guess it ought to be there—take out a bottle of some medicine. Proof that he visited us, just to make our story true."

At this evidence of keen scheming, Timothy could no longer suppress a word of praise. He rubbed his hands, shifted his weight from one foot to another, and declared:

"Agatha, you're all right!"

"Thanks," she replied dryly. "Now, let's get busy. Take—him—out."

It was a gruesome duty, one which was repellent even to Timothy. But he stiffened himself in grim determination, and bent to the corpse. And as his hands touched the still warm body, he abruptly paused—for Gilbert, almost forgotten in the excitement of planning safety, called:

"Throw him in the well, Pop! Throw him in the well!"

Sudden frenzy in his eyes, Timothy glanced up at his wife—rigid and ominous. Her hands were clasped, her face was hard; she stood as stolid as a sphinx, watching him.

"Say," he whispered, "we can't tell when the kid is in—in delirium or when he's all right. Suppose—suppose he blabbers to the people about this—same as he blabbered to the doctor? Suppose—"

Agatha scowled in concern; the weird illumination cast black shadows under her drawn brows.

"First good thing you thought of," she muttered. "We've got to be careful—can't give the boy a chance to blabber. We—we—"

She stopped, pondering. But she had trained her mind to overcome obstacles

in the path of their safety, and it was not long before she decided on a means of guarding themselves from Gilbert's delirium.

"We'll put the boy upstairs," she said curtly. "It'll be harder to hear him there. And—and we'll say he's got something contagious—scarlet fever. We can even put a sign on the door—you'll make a sign, Tim. Scarlet fever. We'll tell 'em the doctor said no one was to go into the house. That'll keep 'em away from Gil. We'll answer all questions outside. Understand?"

Cruze actually smiled in glee.

"Where do you get all the ideas?" he asked fervently.

"Not from you! Now get busy with that. I want to wash the stains."

With savage control of his emotions, Timothy applied himself to the task. Into the well in the yard he dropped the huge body of Dr. Philemon—and when he heard it thud against the rocks fifty feet underground, he felt faint and dizzy. He dropped the doctor's hat and coat and muffler into the pit, kicked its covering of boards into place, and rushed back through the rain to the house.

He fell upon a chair, buried his head in his hands, and sat moaning and swaying.

"It—was—terrible!" he told Agatha. "That sound when he hit the bottom—"

"Forget it! Drive that buggy away!"

She was scrubbing the floor as easily as though she were merely erasing blots of mud. Her angular figure bent to the work, moving back and forth rhythmically with each scratch of the brush.

And presently Timothy regained sufficient strength to begin his journey through the storm. It was miserably chilly as he drove down the road, and he hunched his shoulders while the rain splashed against this face. He passed the dark house of the Drakes, a few other homes—and finaly he reached a desolate spot where he tied the horse to a tree.

After that he trudged home, feeling as if he had removed an unbearable weight from his soul. The dim light in his window promised no cheer; rather, it gleamed with malicious foreboding. It lured—as the eyes of a snake lure. He moved toward it through the penetrating rain, and his heart beat furiously.

When he entered the door, he saw Agatha sitting by the bedside, her bony hand on Gilbert's forehead. She turned to Timothy in tremulous concern.

"We'd better put him upstairs," she said softly. "Soon's I got through cleaning the room, he started saying something like a song he learned in school. A crazy thing. He was delirious again. We'd better put him upstairs."

"What was he saying?" demanded Tim, throwing his wet coat on the once more upright table.

In answer to his query, Gilbert stirred. He squirmed, his mouth opened, and hysterically he began chanting a horrible parody of a song he had been taught. His eyes glared at the yellow lamp and he sang:

"The doctor's in the well,
The doctor's in the well,
I own the cherry-o,
The doctor's in the well!"

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INQUIRY

THOUGH they carried the boy to the upper floor where they tucked him comfortably on a cot, there was no sleep for Agatha and Timothy Cruze that night. Sleep after the terrors of the past few hours was impossible; everything was impossible—save their sitting in the dark room, silent and morbid.

Agatha sat near the window, her stolid face bent, her hands clasped in her lap. Opposite her Timothy glared at the lamp. His huge countenance deeply lined. Nervously his hands rubbed over his knees. He was not conscious of his wet clothes; he was conscious of only one thing: he had murdered a man. . . . And in the morning he would be compelled to meet inquiring villagers.

Well, his story was ready.

Their unspoken meditations were interrupted a dozen times by the chattering of Gilbert. From the upper floor floated the weird chant of *"The doctor's in the well—"*

It fell upon Timothy Cruze with the weight of a blow—and shattered his courage. Each wildly uttered word pounded upon his conscience—pounded steadily, gloomily, unavoidably. He writhed under the weight of the song. Once he sprang to his feet, stamped across the room, and rasped madly:

"Can't you make him stop? Can't you make him stop that damn thing? He's driving me crazy!"

Moodily the gaunt Agatha answered, without glancing up:

"Sit down, Tim. It's the boy's fever. Don't let it bother you."

He tried bravely to follow her instructions. When he sat again, his hands gripped the edge of the chair in an effort to find strength. But he could not escape the fantastic, repeated, *"The doctor's in the well—"*

At dawn, when Agatha blew the flame from the wick of the oil lamp, he was limp and haggard. With bent shoulders he sagged in his chair, and his lips quivered. Soon the villagers would come. And upstairs Gilbert was still muttering, occasionally, *"The doctor's in the well—"*

A bright sun vanquished the rain clouds. Fresh from its shower, the countryside sparkled in the golden light of morning. Vapory masses of billowing white rose lazily from the mountain forests, and were wafted away in ephemeral cloudlets. The vague odor of pine drifted down upon the rickety home of the Cruzes.

Timothy stepped out of the house, filled his lungs with the invigorating air. He looked for an instant at the brilliance of the rising sun, blazing above a distant ridge; he stared about, as he did every morning, at the maze of fiery colors in the dying leaves of autumn; and then—he glanced at the boards which covered the well. He shuddered. Fifty feet under those boards lay the lifeless thing he had thrown there. . . .

With gratification he noticed that no marks of his steps remained in the mud; the rain had effectively washed them into oblivion. Queer, he thought, how daylight brought reassurance and courage. He could breathe easily now, though his head throbbed with lack of sleep, and his eyes were black and cadaverous.

He turned to find Agatha, angular and forbidding and ungainly, beside him. She thrust a slip of paper into his hand.

"Nail it up on the door," she said sullenly. "Don't stand around dreaming. When the folks come, tell 'em you put this up until the doctor sent you one of those regular signs. Get busy, Tim."

He fixed the paper to the door. It bore the alarming words:

"SCARLET FEVER."

"That'll keep 'em out," mumbled Agatha.

She was right. It was almost noon—after an interminably long morning—when four men from the village walked up the road to their home. When the delegation, rather breathless from the rapid search for the doctor, came into the yard, they paused. The glaring sign stopped them as abruptly as the muzzle of a gun might have done. They eyed each other hesitantly.

But Agatha and Timothy stepped out of the door—a tall, menacing couple, uncouth and lumbering. It was the woman who called:

"Good morning!"

A short, bald man, twisting his hat in his hands, moved forward to act as spokesman. Before venturing a word, he tugged at both ends of a shaggy moustache.

"Morning, Mrs. Cruze. Is it your Gilbert who's down with the fever?"

"Yes. The boy—"

"The boy is in a terrible condition," interposed Timothy. That, he recalled, was the proper phrase for such an occasion.

Somewhat abashed, the spokesman stammered:

"I—I'm sorry we got to bother you, then, but—well, something mighty peculiar has happened. Something *very* strange."

"What's that?" demanded Timothy. He frowned questioningly.

"Dr. Philemon—he's disappeared."

"Dr.—Philemon?" Even Agatha admired the surprise in her husband's tone. She raised her brows to indicate her own amazement.

"Yeh," grumbled the spokesman. "Just—disappeared."

Timothy eyed his wife, then turned back to the villagers.

"What do you mean, he's disappeared? When? How?"

"Dunno, Cruze. Dunno anything about it—except what we found this morning."

"What?"

"His wife—she sent out a sort of general alarm. Said her husband hadn't come home after—after going to *your* house."

"He did come to our house," said Agatha.

"I know. So we started up here to ask if he'd left—and—and we found his buggy down the road."

"His buggy!" exclaimed Timothy, moving forward out of the door. "You found his buggy?"

"Yeh. Empty."

"Well!" Timothy addressed the exclamation to his wife. And Agatha succeeded in looking mystified, though she was wracked by turbulent nervousness. From her position she could see the boards which covered the well; the sight nauseated the woman—but she was too hardened a Stoic to surrender to her emotions.

"What do you mean—you found his buggy empty?" she demanded.

The bald spokesman shrugged.

"Just that, Mrs. Cruze. We came upon it about a mile or so down past Drakes'. The horse tied to a tree—and no sign of the doctor."

Agatha expressed fright in her widened eyes.

"Do—do you think he could have been—held up?"

"Held up? On a night like that—in that storm and everything? Dunno, ma'am, but it don't seem likely. Besides—well, lots of queer things happened last night. The doctor's house was robbed."

"What!" It was Timothy who again vented feigned surprise.

"Yeh. His wife's jewels taken, money taken, safe busted. Then the doctor comes up here — and disappears. Funny."

"Mighty funny!" agreed Cruze. He scowled and scratched his head. "Let's see," he mused, "he left here about—about—what time would you say, Agatha?"

"About half past two, I guess."

"Yes, about then. Got into the buggy and drove off."

The bald man pulled at his moustache, perplexed.

"Didn't he act sort of—strange?"

"Not as I noticed," decided Timothy.

"He didn't say a word about the robbery? You know, he discovered it before he left home to come here."

Cruze felt an impulse to utter an oath. He cast an uneasy glance at his motionless wife, for he realized they had erred. Surely, Dr. Philemon would have mentioned the robbery. It must have been paramount in the physician's mind. To suppose that he would have called without speaking of it was ridiculous. And yet the Cruzes had simulated amazement at the announcement of the theft. Their caution had been too great—too great to be convincing. He could detect a hint of suspicion in the villager's query. The man had turned to look at his three associates—a meaning look, it seemed.

But Agatha Cruze assumed control of the situation, as she did in all crises. She was cool. Her gaze had roved over the distant hills to the blue skies, to the drifting clouds skimming lightly before a flippant breeze. As she watched them, a pained expression crossed her features. She said, quite pathetically:

"Maybe the doctor did act sort of funny. Maybe he did, Tim. We didn't notice. Our Gil was so sick—so sick! Even the doctor must have forgotten that robbery when he saw the boy. He didn't mention it, anyway. He was too busy with—Gil. Poor boy!"

The spokesman coughed sympathetically.

"Of course," he said. "Of course, Dr. Philemon wouldn't have bothered you with his own troubles at a time like that. He was too much of a gentleman, was the doctor—I mean, *is* the doctor!" He hastily corrected himself, as if regretting the implication in his use of tenses. "Er—what seems to be the matter with your boy, Mrs. Cruze?"

She choked a sob—a sincere sob, this time; the sob of a mother.

"Fever. He's got the fever."

Pityingly the spokesman shook his head.

"That's awful," he muttered. And one of his associates mumbled:

"Come on—guess we'd better be getting back, men. We ought to tell Mrs. Philemon about the buggy—and get some police on the job. Come on. Let's go. Mrs. Cruze has the boy inside—"

Readily the spokesman acquiesced. He rubbed a hand over his great moustache and said:

"Well, guess we ought to, at that. So you ain't got any information to give us, Cruze?"

"None except what I told you. The doctor left here about half past two, after seeing our Gil. Said he'd send a Board of Health sign up to put on our door. We put this one up meanwhile—to keep folks out. No use—no use letting the thing spread."

"No. No-o. Of course not. . . . We-ell, thanks, Cruze. Don't know what we're going to do about all this. We'll have to leave it to the police, I suppose. . . . Well, good-by. Hope your boy gets better real soon."

"Thanks," replied Timothy, watching the villagers turn away. Great elation was bubbling within him. He had evaded suspicion! He had fooled them—with his wife's brains.

Wishes for Gilbert's recovery were voiced by the other men as they walked off, and Timothy expressed his gratitude solemnly.

And when the visitors had vanished down the road, he turned to Agatha. His eyes shone; he gripped her arms.

"We did it!" he whispered gleefully. "We sent them off!"

"Yes." Mooily she nodded, as impassionate as ever. "Come in. We left Gil alone."

They entered. And the boy's voice came to them in its monotonous chant, thudding upon their nerves with its pitiless persistence:

"The doctor's in the well,
The doctor's in the well. . ."

Timothy suddenly shuddered. He eyed his wife uneasily.

"Can't we make him stop that noise?" he exclaimed harshly.

His answer came from the upper floor. Gilbert cried:

"I want to see the well! Take me to the well! Lemme see the well! The doctor's in the well! . . ."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PIPER IS PAID

GILBERT'S illness became worse during the day—so alarmingly worse that Agatha did not leave his bedside. Though her eyes were heavy with lack of sleep, though she could have slumped down to the floor in sheer weariness, the gaunt woman maintained her vigil. Every few moments her bony hand caressed the boy's fevered forehead, and at such times his ravings abated.

Timothy's endurance was not so great. In the afternoon he threw himself upon a bed on the lower floor, and fell into a deep sleep. He dozed off during one of the intervals in which Gilbert was quiet. And there, on the bed, he sprawled and emitted loud, rhythmic snores. Agatha listened—and somehow she sensed an intangible injustice in the situation. Why was she, who had extricated her husband from a dreadful danger, sitting awake, suffering at the bedside of her son, while Timothy slept?

That had ever been her husband's way. During moments of danger he was nervous, almost cowardly, relying entirely on his wife's ingenuity. When the danger had passed, he forgot it—left her with the after-effects while he slept. . . . Yes, there was injustice in his attitude!

She grumbled; her mouth hardened grimly. If it weren't for Gilbert she would not have tolerated Timothy's ways. For Agatha Cruze, though somber and unattractive and unsentimental, still retained one feminine virtue; she loved her son with all the passionate ardor a woman can bestow upon an only child. If ever she possessed a tender instinct, it was vented in motherly affection. She would have sacrificed everything for Gilbert; he was the one thing which made her colorless life worth living! For him she did everything, gave everything.

And, even if she did not realize it, her husband shared those emotions. He felt no particular love for his wife; but for his son—the only offering he had ever made to the world—he nursed a strange, unexpressed masculine adoration. It was seldom shown, seldom permitted to evince itself in actions—but under his brusqueness the love for his child slumbered ever. It was deep, passionate. Were anything to happen to Gilbert; were the boy to die of his fever—life would have become worthless, empty.

And so these parents, merely tolerating each other, were held in family ties by their son. They were wondering what his fever would do to him—wondering in unexpressed fear. And yet Timothy could sleep. . . . A strange, unfathomable man.

He was roused when darkness had once more fallen over the countryside. He blinked up into the sallow, bony face of Agatha. She had lighted the oil lamp, and its sickly yellow light played upon her features. She shook his shoulder.

"Wake up, Tim, and get something to eat. Gil's fallen asleep."

With much grumbling, Timothy rose. They ate meagerly at the rickety table, the flickering lamp between them. As he peered at her weirdly illumined countenance, at the black shadows under the cheek-bones and under the eyes, he said:

"You look tired, Agatha."

It was an unusual attention on his part, even to notice her weariness. Quickly she glanced down at her plate.

"Been sitting with Gil," she explained.

"How is he? Seems quiet now."

"Yes. Just fell into a doze. But—but he's worse than yesterday—much worse."

"I wonder—"

His words were interrupted with stunning suddenness. Agatha jumped from her chair; he, too, rose, gaped at the wall.

From the upper floor had come the piercing scream; and Gilbert's voice shrieked wildly:

"The doctor's in the well! I see him, Pop, I see him! He's in the bottom of the well! I can see him, Pop; I can see him again!"

"Delirious again!" whispered Agatha.

Timothy rushed up the stairs, his wife behind him. They found the boy writhing in agony on his cot; his face was crimson, blistered. The lips, parched and sore, squirmed as he prattled insanely of the doctor in the well. Timothy caught his son's hands, gripped them tightly as if the pressure would ease the suffering of the child. Beside him Agatha looked on, stern and worried, breathing hard.

"He's worse than ever," she murmured. "Worse than ever. I'm afraid, Tim!"

"He'll be all right after a while," he assured her, though he felt no confidence in his assertion.

"All day he's been saying he wants to see the well—"

Timothy shuddered perceptibly; but he answered:

"He'll be all right; he'll be all right!"

"But I'm afraid, Tim—"

They remained at the bedside while Gilbert's delirium became steadily more turbulent. Gazing anxiously upon the stricken boy, Agatha forgot her fatigue, forgot that she had not slept in two days, that she had not eaten—even that murder had been committed in the lurking shadows of her home. She thought of Gilbert only, of the danger in which her son was.

And after an hour she seized her husband's arm and declared:

"Tim, we've got to get another doctor! Get Dr. Loop from Hurleyville. That's nearest. We've got to!"

At the suggestion Timothy changed. His features had been lined with commiseration for the sick child. Now, as he turned in amazement to his wife, pity gave way to terror. His mouth opened wide.

"Get another doctor!" he gasped. "We can't!"

"And why can't we?"

"Because — because — don't you see, Agatha? The other doctor will hear Gil blabber about the well—and—and—"

"Blabber about the well—" she murmured, dazed.

And then she understood. For Timothy's safety no one must enter their home before Gilbert recovered from his delirium. . . . And for Gilbert's safety, a doctor must be called. . . . A predicament which brought into conflict her maternal instincts and her desire to shield her husband.

She paled as she stared at the boy. If she didn't summon a physician, who could say what might happen? If she did—a slight shudder coursed through her gaunt body. Appealingly she looked at Timothy.

This was a time when Agatha Cruze needed sympathy, needed a strong arm and a strong mind to guide her—needed them desperately. She was tired and shaken by the events which had fallen upon her; within her something was drooping hopelessly; the burdens she bore were fast becoming too heavy. She needed support.

Instead, she received from her husband a look of misery, of cowardice, of fear. She found herself forced to decide without help. And she did.

"Tim," she said softly as she rose, "I'm going to 'phone Dr. Loop."

Without another word, she descended the stairs creaking under her weight. In the dark chamber on the lower floor, she threw a shawl about her shoulders in preparation for the walk to Drakes'. It was an old shawl, gray and lifeless, conforming with her personality.

Though she eyed the food on the table rather wistfully, she determined to telephone for the physician of the neighboring town before she did anything else. The fantastic glow from the oil lamp fell

upon her worn features; she blinked at the light, for her eyes smarted. But she had reached a decision, and she moved to carry it out; Timothy must be sacrificed for Gilbert! . . . Mother-love was the more powerful.

But even as she strode forward grimly, Timothy clattered down the steps. He rushed to the door, placed his broad back against it. As he faced her, he appeared gigantic, towering, even menacing. The sickly light poured upon his distorted, puffed face.

"You ain't going!" he snarled.

Pausing, she eyed him coolly.

"I am."

"I say you ain't—and you ain't!"

Her lips parted in an ugly sneer, hideous on her sallow features.

"You're a coward, Tim! You ain't a man—you're a dog!"

"Don't care what you say," he rasped back. "I ain't going to hang 'cause you think the kid needs a doctor. He don't!"

"He—he'll die if I don't get one."

Timothy gulped, glanced away in fear. But immediately his bravado reasserted itself.

"He won't die—that's just your talk. You're going to stay right here. No doctor—*nobody* comes into this house till the kid stops blabbering about the well."

Agatha's lean arms were crooked, as she placed her hands on her hips in a challenging gesture.

"Suppose I do go?" she said.

"I ain't going to let you."

"What'll you do?"

"*Keep* you here, that's what!"

"By force? With your hands?"

"Yes, with my hands!"

She smiled bitterly.

"It won't be the first time you beat me," she said.

But slowly she turned and went back to the bed. Upon it she sank thoughtfully. There was no sense in opposing Timothy when so violent a mood was upon him. She knew her husband. He would beat her, throw her upon the floor, compel her with brutal force to remain at home, if she attempted to call a doctor.

She did not mind the pain his fists inflicted. What troubled her was the knowledge that a beating from her husband would incapacitate her for days—it had always had that effect. And there would be no one to care for Gilbert. . . .

No, she could not throw her strength against the power of Timothy. She would wait at least until he slept.

The fact that in a short time Gilbert subsided into deep slumber lent Timothy cause for malicious gloating.

"See!" he told her as she gazed wanly upon the boy. "He's better now, ain't he? Sound asleep. Quiet. Suppose you'd called the doctor, it would have been a useless risk. Who was wiser—you or me?"

"You, of course," she replied sardonically.

"Sure I was right. And now that the kid's asleep, suppose we take the opportunity to rest? Come on, Agatha. Let's go down. You need sleep, if you're half as tired as I am."

"Half as tired as you—" she repeated weakly, and smiled. Oh, how unutterably stupid and cowardly and vile she was discovering her husband to be!

Without undressing, they threw themselves on the bed. The lower floor, with the light blown out, was impenetrably black. It took Timothy but a moment to fall into sonorous sleep.

But Agatha lingered on the border of wakefulness. She would wait a while, she promised herself, until Timothy would no longer notice her movements. Then she would steal off to telephone Dr. Loop. Gilbert needed him—needed him—

She dozed off, slept for a long, long time. Unconsciously she snuggled against the warmth of her husband's huge body, and her arm crept about him. Two lumbering farm toilers, suited to each other, yet unhappy. . . .

It must have been near dawn when she awoke with a start. She was trembling as she sat up in bed, and her hand rose to her lips. She looked about the blackness—saw nothing. Yet, strangely, she sensed a premonition that something was wrong. . .

Beside her Timothy still slept. She thought of the doctor; and she cursed herself. Why had she permitted weariness to conquer her? She must go now—*now*—

Quietly she pushed herself off the bed, groped for the shawl, threw it around her ungainly back. She started for the door—and saw with a gasp that it was open.

A breeze, blowing in upon her, scattered her straggling hair and brought a queer dread. Without a sound, she turned, hurried up the steps to Gilbert's room.

A moment later she flew down, flung herself desperately upon her husband, shook him to wakefulness. She was screaming.

"Tim! Tim! Gil is gone—he's gone!"

He blinked up through the darkness.

"Hey? What?"

"Get up! Gil is gone, I tell you—*he's gone!* He's not in his bed! And—and the door's open!"

She was quivering as if the fever had caught her. She actually dragged Timothy out of the bed by sheer force. And as the meaning of his wife's words sank into his consciousness, he suddenly displayed an access of energy.

He hissed a fearful oath, dashed up the stairs. Instantly he returned, dazed, staggering.

"You're right," he said. "He's—gone!"

"And the door's open!"

"God!" he whispered.

Then he sprang to the door and with all the power of his lungs shouted:

"Gil! Gil! Son, where are you?"

There was no answer. As he called again, his voice throbbed with the anguish of his soul. Anguish which Agatha shared, felt even more keenly.

They tore out into the night, rushing about desperately in a wild search. And as she ran blindly, Agatha Cruze yelled hysterically:

"It's your fault, Tim! Your fault! You wouldn't let me go for the doctor! That might have saved the boy! You wouldn't let me go! I tell you, I swear—do you hear?—I *swear* if anything happens to him, I'll tell everybody everything—about the murder—everything!"

Timothy was suffering in torture too great to permit his saying anything but:

"If anything happens to him, I don't care what you tell everybody!"

And then suddenly he came to an abrupt stop, while all the strength oozed from his quaking body. His legs sagged; his eyes were dilated; he crumpled to his knees, gaping before him at the ground.

Agatha came to his side; with a moan of horrible comprehension she fell beside him, and gazed in terror-stricken fascination at the ground. A finger, trembling, moved forward to point at the dreadful thing.

Before them yawned the open hole of the well. The boards had been pushed back. . . .

"He—he wanted to—see—see the well!" whispered Agatha, each word forced out of a choking throat.

Without a sound, the quivering Timothy bent forward. He lit a match, cupped it in his hands, and held it over the pit. Mother and father peered down—peered in fearful awe.

And then Agatha Cruze collapsed against her husband's shoulder.

Far, far down in the well, scarcely visible in the dim light of the match flame, lay the still body of little Gilbert—sprawling across the form of Dr. Philemon. . .

THE END

The Wax Image

A Weird Chinese Story

By BURTON HARCOURT

SO AH FOO is really dead! I had expected this, fearfully, for some time, yet the curt paragraph in the *Dispatch* is still a ghastly surprise. I am tempted to believe I have been dreaming—that it is all a weird and inexplicable mistake. One has adventures that do not really occur, when one dabbles in opium.

And newspapers, they say, generally lie. But that is a fallacy. They do not lie. When a newspaper says that a man is dead and that he was picked up on the sidewalk in front of his tea-shop, he *is* generally dead. Ah Foo is dead. I must admit it. And Sam Wong is a devil. I shall not go to his shop again. There are other places in Chinatown where one can smoke pipes.

I have always feared that there exist in the world certain sublimated forces and powers which transcend our ordinary concepts, that in the queer substances of the human soul there exist forces as inexplicable as electricity—that weird goblin of the material world. I have always feared it, but we shrink from *believing* such things.

In the bright sunlight, by day, and even by night, close in touch with the solid realities of our environment we are oblivious to the strange Forces and Powers of the spiritual world, and we dupe ourselves into a firm faith in that which is seen and felt. We conclude that the human mind is a creature close-confined in the solid walls of the skull, circumscribed and imprisoned by bone and flesh; and that its powers are likewise limited to those narrow chambers of the body. We conclude that its processes are but those simple *localized* processes which we name sensation, memory, thought.

It does not occur to us—we do not allow it to occur to us—that the powers of the human mind may extend far beyond the walks of the individual skull, out and beyond into the exterior world, as intangible and powerful as electricity, as deadly, as effective, as potent for good or evil. After all, what are Time and Space? The wisest men of ten thousand years have been unable to explain these mysteries. Perhaps Space itself is but an illusion, a phantom, a wraith. *Perhaps a thought grown into intense reality in one place becomes a reality in all places.* I think so, now, since Ah Foo is dead.

Ah Foo, talking to a customer last night at *ten minutes past ten,* fell in his tracks stone dead. I did not see it. I was at Sam Wong's. But the facts are here in the paper. I must admit it.

I was first directed to Sam Wong's by an English sea-captain, well advanced in years, who had know him long ago in Shanghai. We went together the first time, and, having made friends with Sam Wong, I went to see him thereafter alone. I went frequently, for, though the habit of opium smoking is a vile one, it is the hardest of all to break.

Immemorially old, Sam Wong is immemorially wise. His ancient Chinese face, wrinkled like a monkey's, is a comical one, but his small and brilliant eyes reveal a high intelligence. He knows more of the Oriental secrets than any Chinaman it has been my fortune to meet, and though his English is atrocious, his vocabulary is large. He taught me early in our acquaintance much about Buddhism, much about Taoism, which I had never suspected.

As his customers are few—for the New Orleans police are none too lenient on opium-smoking and Sam Wong is a cautious merchant—we had many friendly chats. I came to know him well, and to admire him more. His wife—a tiny yellow woman, not pretty, but young and delightfully gracious—filled my bowl for me as I sat with Sam Wong in his hidden reception-room, where the lucky half dozen of us who were granted his hospitality, enjoyed, always separately, the forbidden drug.

It was from Mrs. Wong I learned of the quarrel between Sam Wong and Ah Foo. She was non-committal, but I am quite sure that the quarrel was somehow intimately concerned with Mrs. Wong. Ah Foo was a handsome and very engaging fellow, as Chinamen go. His tea-shop was only three doors from Sam Wong's. Ah Foo was handsome: Sam Wong was as hideous as an ape. I am sure that the quarrel concerned Mrs. Wong. But all that she revealed to me was the sudden venomous hatred of Sam Wong for Ah Foo. She was afraid, she said, that Sam Wong would actually murder Ah Foo.

I only laughed at this, for, as I told her, Sam Wong was much too intelligent a man to kill anyone in America. However lenient our courts may be in general, they have small mercy for Chinamen.

"Sam Wong is too clever for that," I said. "He knows he would hang. And a philosopher like Sam Wong, no matter how angry he was, would never be foolish enough to go to the gallows in order to get the best of a quarrel."

Mrs. Wong shook her head dubiously.

It was soon after quite plain to me that Sam Wong was desperately suspicious of his wife. His eyes narrowed as he looked at her when her back was turned. There was a malignant gleam in them. But I did not dare to broach personal questions with Sam Wong, as our conversation was always of a philosophical order. And I learned nothing more for some time.

Then, one night, when Sam Wong invited me above-stairs into his sanctum to show me a bronze image which was one of his particular prides, I received a queer shock.

THE room was large and furnished completely in a Chinaman's style. The light from the braziers was somewhat dim and, as I was accustoming my eyes to the twilight, endeavoring to see the wealth of Oriental furnishings among which Sam Wong passed his leisure hours, I noticed someone standing very still in the far corner.

It was a Chinaman, certainly, but Sam Wong had not spoken to him nor so much as noticed him when we entered. He stood so still that it suddenly occurred to me that he did not wish to be detected. I called to Sam Wong, who was removing his bronze relic from a cabinet, and pointed toward the corner.

He laughed. Then, stepping to the wall, he pressed a switch, flooding the room with electric light.

The figure was not a man but a wax doll; a Chinaman, life size, standing upright in the corner. It was not, indeed, a living likeness of the human face and body, and if the light had been better I

should not have been startled by it at all.

"What is this, Sam Wong?" I asked, amused.

"Ah Foo," said Sam Wong.

I was puzzled.

Sam Wong laughed.

"Ah Foo," he said. "My velly good fiend, Ah Foo."

We descended to the smoking-room without my having seen the bronze image. We had both forgotten it.

Although at the moment the strange affair both puzzled and alarmed me, it had almost escaped my memory next day. I thought no more of it. Sam Wong had so many queer things in his establishment—and a wax doll which he might have acquired from any bankrupt traveling showman did not seem particularly remarkable.

But two weeks later I noticed a familiar small figure in the shooting gallery on Magazine Street, two blocks from Chinatown. I turned in, to see if my surmise was at all correct. It was really Sam Wong. He was firing with remarkable accuracy at the round targets. Two times out of three he penetrated the bull's-eye, and the bell rang.

He smiled when I accosted him.

"Me velly good shlot," he said.

The gallery-keeper smiled patronizingly.

"He's learning fast," he said. "Three weeks ago he couldn't have hit a barn."

I decided at once that this activity on Sam Wong's part boded no good for Ah Foo. And yet I could hardly believe that Sam Wong would really shoot his enemy. There are so many better ways that a Chinaman knows to dispose of an "obstacle."

"Sam Wong," I said at his den that night, "don't make a fool of yourself. The penalty for shooting a man in this country is hanging."

He smiled.

"In Lome," said Sam Wong, "Chinaman do as the Lomans do. Melican gentlemen shoot and kill. Sam Wong follow clustom of cluntry. Hang? All same, no difference."

MRS. WONG whispered in my ear for the hundredth time, that she was desperately afraid Sam Wong was soon going to murder Ah Foo. He caught the words—or the last words, anyway. He turned from his task at the other side of the room, smiling affably.

"Ah Foo," he said. "My velly good fiend, Ah Foo."

Mrs. Wong shuddered.

That was five days ago.

I was at Sam Wong's last night. It was a very strange thing I saw there. If it were not for the morning paper before me, I would think I had dreamed it.

When I arrived Sam Wong was in a very nervous state. He was highly excited. He did not wish me to smoke at once. He wished me to talk. I sat down, rather impatiently. Sam Wong sat down on the couch beside me, nervously, and began to talk.

"Many thing you know nothing about," he said, "Chilaman know. Melican men velly iglorant. 'Lectricity? Yes. 'Lectricity, all. Mind? Nothing. You know nothing in this cluntry. 'Lectricity not wisdom. Mind is wisdom."

I followed him but vaguely. He was too excited for coherent speech.

"You Orientals know much more than we do about the mind, Sam Wong," I said, "and nobody is quicker to admit it than we. You are older and wiser in China. Hypnotism and clairvoyance are still, with us, in their infancy—"

"You my velly good fiend?" demanded Sam Wong, suddenly interrupting.

"Why, yes," I said.

"Clum," said Sam Wong.

I followed him above-stairs to his sanctum.

As I entered the room, the first thing that met my eye was the waxen image—his very good friend, Ah Foo—which was in bright light. Two braziers on either side on the floor, from the flames of which thin fiery vapors mounted with a pungent odor, cast over it a golden illumination. Otherwise the room was not lighted. The waxen image of Ah Foo stood out very brilliantly. And I noted that the figure had been dressed in ceremonial robes of violet and silver. Also, with a queer premonition of impending evil, I saw that a small red card, no larger than a postage stamp, was pinned on the left breast, precisely over the heart.

"Slit down," said Sam Wong.

I sat down upon a couch toward which he motioned. I felt a sudden nausea of horror, which I could not explain. I glanced about nervously for Mrs. Wong, but she was not in evidence.

"What's the meaning of this, Sam Wong?" I demanded. "You don't mean to say that you worship this gargoyle?"

Sam Wong stepped to a small table directly across the room from the figure. He laughed.

"Worship?" he asked. "Sam Wong worship? This figure not for *worship*."

Suddenly he became very quiet and restrained. He carefully picked up some object from the table. With his left hand he waved toward the figure as if to introduce it to me again. He was very ceremonious.

"Ah Foo," he said. "My velly good fiend, Ah Foo."

And suddenly he raised a revolver and leveled it before him. For five seconds he aimed tensely, unwaveringly, his small eyes boring fierily at the figure between the braziers. Then he fired. I had sat dumbfounded at the spectacle. The deafening report in the small room startled me back into my wits. As the smoke cleared I saw with admiration that the bullet had pierced the little red card at its geometrical center. I laughed nervously.

"Good shot, Sam Wong," I said. "I hope this has eased your spleen."

He lay the revolver on the table, laughing softly.

"Tlen minutes past tlen," he said.

I glanced at my watch. It was, precisely, ten minutes past ten.

"Clum," said Sam Wong, very affably, rubbing his withered hands. "Clum. We smoke. No pay. You my velly good fiend."

"Devil's Grip" Spreading

WITH health boards of the State of Virginia exercising the utmost vigilance in an effort to check the spread of the fatal malady know as "devil's grip," which is sweeping Virginia and which has appeared in Delaware and other parts of the country, new cases continued to be reported to the authorities. Chief Health Officer Hudson, of the Richmond health bureau, was appraised of three new cases recently, bringing the total thus far in Richmond alone to forty-eight.

Dr. Hudson said that as the malady had not been made reportable by the city or the state health boards, there are probably some case that have not been brought to the attention of the state health commissioner.

Another Fantastic Tale
By the Author of "The Snake Fiend"
And "The Teakwood Shrine"

POISONED

By FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

IT WAS a trifling quarrel indeed that broke the life-long friendship of Aubrey Charles the lawyer and Aubrey Leclair the apothecary.

"Look for the woman," says the old proverb. It was not a woman that caused the quarrel between the two Aubreys, but it was because of a woman that the breach widened and friendship turned to hate. Thereby the proverb justifies itself once more.

"Board is play, Aubrey," said Charles as Leclair threw down a king upon the first player's ace.

"Don't be a fool, Aubrey," said Leclair. "I meant to play my deuce. Anybody in his right senses would know I would never play my king on your ace."

"Board is play, Aubrey," repeated Charles, with a rising inflection in his voice. "It's not my fault that you play like a dunce."

Leclair threw his cards into the air, seized his hat, opened his mouth as if to speak, then stamped out of the lawyer's office without a word, slamming the door behind him.

There had been petulant outbursts before, due always to Leclair's habit of taking back his cards after he had played them. Charles had frequently vowed to himself that he never would play with Leclair again. But the pair were inseparable, and they were always at it again next day, the apothecary taking back his plays as carelessly as ever.

Leclair stormed out into the street, distressed beyond measure that Aubrey Charles placed so little value on his friendship as to insist on such an obviously ridiculous play. Aubrey Charles sat in his inner office berating himself for his irritability, and prepared once more to swallow his dignity, as he had done on several occasions before. He had been unreasonable, and he knew it.

"But I was right, the idiot!" he exclaimed aloud, striking the desk in a fury of resentment. "Board is always play. Good God! Mut I be always babying him to keep his friendship?"

There the quarrel might have ended, had it not been for Mazie Lennox, who had nursed both Aubreys through the

flu and was engaged to marry Aubrey the attorney. Aubrey Charles, ready to unbend and eat humble pie, yet full of his wrongs, pulled the telephone to him to call up the other Aubrey and apologize, when it struck him that the apothecary would hardly have had time to reach his drug store. So he telephoned to Mazie instead.

In lieu, therefore, of a contrite apology over the telephone from Aubrey Charles, the apothecary got a severe dressing down from Mazie Lennox. It was Mazie who called him first, before the attorney got the wire.

"What under the sun did you mean by stamping out of Aubrey's office and scattering your cards all over the place?" she stormed. "Aubrey, I am downright ashamed of you. Have you no more sense than to let a disagreement over a card game lead to a quarrel between you and Aubrey? What on earth was the matter with you?"

"But Aubrey wanted me to throw away my king on his ace," Aubrey the apothecary exclaimed, scandalized.

To the sense of injury that he nursed against Charles was now added a sense of personal outrage because Charles had told Mazie about the quarrel. Leclair did not know that at that very moment the other Aubrey was trying to reach him on the telephone to beg his pardon and repair the breach between them.

"He treated me as if I were a naughty child, and got angry because I didn't want to throw the game to him by letting the wrong play stand. He called me a dunce."

"What if he did?" said Mazie. "I can't let the two best friends I have in the world quarrel. Now listen, Aubrey. I am going to Klickitamas tonight over the week end. You and Aubrey, both of you, are to follow me tomorrow and forget your differences. I simply won't have you quarreling. That's flat."

With that she rang off, leaving Aubrey the apothecary jiggling the telephone and trying to get her back, wiping the perspiration from his brow as he waited for her to answer. But Mazie was on her way over to the office of the other Aubrey to go out with him to dinner before she left for Klickitamas.

Too proud to refuse Mazie's invitation, too angry to call up Aubrey Charles, Aubrey the apothecary arranged to be absent from his drug store over Sunday, and the next noon he took the train for Klickitamas.

A word or two on the telephone from Aubrey the attorney, who was undoubtedly in the wrong, would have applied balm to his hurt feelings and averted all the tragedy that followed.

But Aubrey the lawyer hated to be put in a false light. Dignity to him was a fetish, before which he worshiped. It was his principal stock in trade. There was not in the whole country a man who made a more impressive appearance in court. Always expensively but conservatively dressed, with upright carriage, serious and noble countenance, heightened by a close-cropped mustache that made him look older than he was, he impressed the juries by his very appearance. Even his games of cards with Aubrey the apothecary were always conducted in the lawyer's inner office, for Aubrey Charles did not wish the public to see him in his moments of relaxation, when he stooped to so trivial a pastime as playing cards.

Therefore Aubrey the lawyer, who in the first flush of contrition over the quarrel had sought to call up Aubrey the apothecary, now waited for the apothecary to make the first move toward reconciliation. He would apologize then, but his dignity would be saved if Leclair called him up first. He could not go to Klickitamas. If he telephoned the apothecary and told him this, he knew very well that the apothecary would also stay away from Klickitamas. But it would seem an admission that he feared to leave Mazie with Leclair over the week-end. Would not Leclair think that it was this reason alone that prompted him to call up and apologize? Reasoning thus, Aubrey the lawyer refrained from telephoning to his friend, and Aubrey the apothecary went to Klickitamas alone.

Aubrey Leclair, as the closest friend and confident of the other Aubrey, regarded Mazie as a pal, but nothing closer, for she was the future wife of his friend. He liked Mazie immensely, and used to follow her about the room with his eyes, feasting them on her well-fitting nurse's garb and her mobile mouth and mysterious brown eyes, when he was recovering from the flu. But from the beginning she and the other Aubrey had taken to each other. They had gone together, after the two Aubreys were out of the hospital. Aubrey the apothecary was the third party, the friend of both, and he had accepted the love of his two friends for each other as a matter of course. He was loyal to his friend Aubrey Charles, and glad to see him win so sterling a girl as Mazie.

But that night everything seemed different. The spell of moonlight and the water worked in him a spring madness, and he desired the girl for himself. Her eyes invited confidences, and her tone was one of tender friendship. Her face was near his. The sense of loyalty to his friend—the friend who had injured him—dissolved like one of his own drugs, in the water and the moonlight. His lips met hers. Mazie drew away and laughed, softly, nervously.

"By proxy," she said, "I enjoyed that. Did you give that to me for Aubrey Charles or Aubrey Leclair?"

He had hardly brushed her lips with his own, but the thrill and promise of the slight kiss intoxicated him, and the warmth of her lips heated his blood.

"That may have been for Aubrey Charles," he exclaimed, in a voice half-choked with sudden emotion, "but this is from Aubrey Leclair."

He pressed her tightly to his breast. Again and again he kissed her, on the throat, the lips, the eyes. She did not struggle, but lay limply in his arms, speechless, powerless, amazed by this treachery of her friend to her friend, as in burning words he declared the strength of his own love.

"Not Aubrey Charles, but Aubrey Leclair," he repeated. "I was loyal to Aubrey while he was loyal to me, but he has broken with me for nothing at all. I refuse to yield you to him."

"Aubrey!"

Mazie's voice rang out, at once angry and beseeching.

"Aubrey, do you realize what you are doing?"

She held out her hand in front of his eyes. A large diamond sparkled in the moonlight. Aubrey the lawyer had placed it upon her finger. The sparkle of that betrothal diamond was to Aubrey Leclair like a piece of ice laid across his heart. The spring madness still possessed him, but it had been touched by the rigor of winter.

"Mazie!" he exclaimed.

His voice sounded far away and distant, like some sinister whispering from evil lips.

"Mazie, I cannot let you marry Aubrey Charles! You with your purity, your sweetness! You must not! I have stood by Aubrey, despite my knowledge of certain events he has kept hidden from the world, because a man looks on such lapses quite differently from a woman. Did you ever hear of Lena May?"

Mazie clapped her hand roughly over Aubrey's mouth, as if to silence him. Then she shrank from him, and shook herself free of his embrace.

"Lena May?" she exclaimed, standing up and confronting Aubrey desperately.

Even in the moonlight Aubrey noticed how pale she was.

"What has Lena May to do with Aubrey?"

"Ask him," replied Aubrey Leclair. "He can't deny it. He wouldn't give her fifty dollars each month for the support of her child unless it were true. I have delivered the money to her each month as Aubrey's errand boy, for he wants no checks made out to her, by which he can be blackmailed later on. You are wearing Aubrey's ring, but it is Lena May who should be wearing it."

A strong shiver of revulsion shook Mazie.

"You beast!" she exclaimed. "You filthy beast! And you call yourself his friend!"

She fled into the house.

UNBENDING pride on the one hand, resentment and spring madness on the other—the breach was accomplished in the long friendship of the two Aubreys.

Mazie Lennox ceased to wear Aubrey Charles' ring. A year later she was married to Dr. Armitage, who had been a friend of her youth. Both Aubrey Charles and Aubrey Leclair were silent guests at the wedding. Neither had spoken a word to the other since the day when Aubrey Leclair stormed out of Aubrey Charles' office, scattering the cards about the room as he went.

The tall, dignified lawyer had never seemed so frigid and reserved as on that day when his heart's treasure was given to another. The usually jovial apothecary was as unsmiling and reserved as the other Aubrey. His face was a sober mask.

Aubrey Charles the lawyer left immediately after the minister spoke the words that made Dr. Armitage and Mazie Lennox man and wife. Aubrey Leclair the apothecary was even more downcast than the other Aubrey. He had not only lost the girl himself, but his treachery to Aubrey the attorney had lost him the friendship that he valued above anything that had ever come into his life. He felt that he was to blame for the whole tragedy. A senseless quarrel had ruffled the smooth surface of his comradeship with Aubrey Charles, and he, Aubrey Leclair, instead of steering for untroubled waters, had deliberately wrecked the craft of friendship and overturned the boat. He hated the other Aubrey with all the animus of his nature, venomously, with a hate that would stop at nothing. But at this moment he wanted air. He was choking in the festival atmosphere of the wedding, drowning in the whirlpool of his own emotions. He left the house of mirth abruptly, stepped into his car and left the little city behind him.

Racked by his thoughts, tortured by regrets, stung by hatred, he hardly noticed where he went, until he heard his name called. He drew up beside the curb. He found himself in the streets of a city twenty miles from his own. It was a friend, a fellow apothecary, who was calling to him.

Aubrey got out of his car, and wandered arm in arm into the drug store with the friend who had called to him. He welcomed this brief respite from the torment of his thoughts. And here he learned news that smote him first with a pang of conscience, and then made him glow with pleasure. For the apothecary told him, confidentially, that Aubrey the lawyer had bought a strong poison to kill a large dog, or so at least he had told the druggist when he bought it.

"A dog?" exclaimed Aubrey in some surprise.

"A great Dane he has had for several years," explained the druggist. "It has a tumor, he says, and he finds it necessary to kill the dog. I sold the poison to him because he is a close friend of yours. But I wonder he did not go to you."

"Perhaps," Aubrey said, musingly, "perhaps he was afraid I was so much attached to the dog that I would insist on trying to cure it. Much obliged."

"For what?" asked the apothecary.

"For selling the poison to my friend."

AUBREY LECLAIR had something new to occupy his thoughts as he motored slowly back. Aubrey the lawyer had never possessed a dog. He evidently did not want Aubrey the apothecary to know that he wanted poison, so he came to this other city to get it. He wanted it, then, for himself. He was very despondent, although his face and demeanor in public showed no relaxation from his habitual dignity and reserve.

Aubrey Charles had indeed bought the poison to slay himself, but his sense of dignity prevented him from carrying out his intention. He found it easier to support the pangs of despondency than to let the world peep into his heart at a coroner's inquest. That inevitable scene was enacted in his mind a hundred times. Always it cost him a shudder to picture the curiosity of his little world of acquaintances (for he had no close friends now that Aubrey Leclair had forsaken him) as they learned how Mazie Lennox had cast him aside because of his clandestine affair with Lena May. Aubrey would be dead when these revelations were made, but even his soul must shrink in shamed humiliation when the world saw what a sorry figure he had cut. So he lived with his bitter thoughts, and the poison remained unused in a cupboard of his inner office.

Aubrey Leclair the apothecary, cheated of the suicide of Aubrey Charles, felt that fate had treated him cruelly. Like the lawyer, he had been robbed of his chum and his girl. Even revenge was denied to him. So when a trivial legal matter that involved his interests made it necessary for him to sign certain papers, he went to the office of Aubrey the lawyer to arrange the matter. This visit would give him the opportunity to see for himself just how deeply the lawyer was suffering from their mutual disaster.

No figure of bronze could have been more unbending than Aubrey Charles when Aubrey Leclair entered the lawyer's office, except that this figure opened its mouth and spoke.

"I will not shake hands, Aubrey," said the figure, slowly. "I do not wish to revive old friendships. But because we were once friends, you and I, I will offer you a glass of wine, pre-prohibition vintage."

The figure moved majestically into the inner office. Aubrey the apothecary, imitating the lawyer's lofty reserve, stood with folded arms awaiting his return. Behind the closed door of the inner office the lawyer's haughtiness dropped from him like a mantle. Feverishly he hunted for a white powder he had placed there some weeks before, at the time of Mazie Lennox's marriage to Dr. Armitage. Finding it, he poured it into a wine glass, filled the glass with wine, and poured out another glass for Aubrey.

Returning to the outer office, he placed one glass before Aubrey Leclair. Before himself he carefully put the poisoned glass. His hand shook so that he spilled some of the wine. His brow was damp with perspiration. His icy reserve had melted utterly. Aubrey the apothecary still stood with folded arms. Slowly he shook his head.

"You drink too much, Aubrey," said the apothecary.

"Not for the love of liquor, Aubrey," replied the lawyer, "but to forget sorrow. You have hurt me, Aubrey, but you have hurt yourself equally. Let us drink."

"You began it," said Aubrey the apothecary, coldly. "I will not drink with you."

"Perhaps the wine is too strong," persisted Aubrey the lawyer. "You are not a drinking man like me. I will get you some water."

Aubrey the apothecary did not answer. The lawyer seemed perplexed and unwilling to leave the room. The apothecary still stood, an icy statue. Anyone knowing the two, knowing the dignified reserve of the lawyer and the genial good-fellowship of the apothecary, would have thought Aubrey Leclair was the lawyer and Aubrey Charles the apothecary. The lawyer suddenly left the outer office and went quickly into the inner room. Aubrey Leclair heard him turn on the tap. In a minute he returned with a pitcher of water and another glass. The apothecary stood with folded arms as before. Apparently the glasses had not been moved, but Aubrey Leclair's face showed a trace of agitation, which seemed to satisfy Aubrey the lawyer.

"No water, please," said Aubrey the apothecary. "I will drink it as it stands."

"To the health of Mazie Lennox!" said Aubrey Charles in ringing tones, looking with a strange expression of shrewdness and triumph at Aubrey the apothecary.

Without an instant's hesitation, he lifted his own glass, clinked it against the glass of Aubrey Leclair, and carried it to his lips. Both men drained the last drop. Aubrey Charles then snapped the stem of his glass, and tossed it into the waste basket.

"And now to business, Aubrey."

The lawyer had resumed his habitual calm. The two men sat down. Aubrey Charles read aloud, very slowly, the paper that he wanted Aubrey Leclair to sign. From time to time he cast a quick glance at the apothecary. Always he found the eyes of the other fixed on his face. He grew nervous at this unwavering stare, and his glances at the apothecary became more frequent. Aubrey Leclair's gaze never faltered.

A sense of impending tragedy held Aubrey Charles in a vise. His face twitched spasmodically. Why was this? He tried to fight off the dreadful doubt that clutched him. He reasoned with himself thus: Aubrey Leclair has changed the wine glasses, thereby taking for himself the poisoned glass. He thinks that I gave him the poisoned glass, and that he has given it back to me. If it were not so, why would he watch me thus? He is looking for symptoms of poisoning. But it is he who has drunk the poison. Why should I be afraid?

Again his face twitched. He sprang to his feet. A sharp pain shot through his heart. He saw Aubrey the apothecary relax from his intense stare and settle back in his chair, satisfied. A horrible suspicion set the lawyer's brain on fire. Had Aubrey been watching him through the chink in the door? But that could hardly be. Another pang shot through his heart. A strong shudder racked his body. He clutched at the table, missed it, and fell to the floor. Aubrey Leclair smiled at him.

"Aubrey!"

It was the lawyer who spoke. His whole body was convulsed from the poison.

"Yes, Aubrey?"

The apothecary smiled again.

"Aubrey! Did you—did you change the glasses?"

The smile vanished from the lips of Aubrey the apothecary as he leaned over his dying enemy. His brows were knit in anger, and hate sat on his face like a dark cloud.

"Yes, Aubrey, I changed the glasses."

The apothecary's voice thrilled with triumph.

"You are caught in your own death-trap," he continued. "I would not drink your wine, for I knew you had poisoned it. While you were in the inner office I changed glasses. I not only gave you the glass you intended for me, but I poisoned your wine myself, to make sure. I took no chances."

Now it was Aubrey the lawyer who smiled, as he lay in convulsions on the floor.

"Then we shall meet again," he said weakly. "Au revoir, Aubrey, but not good-by. Au revoir! Au rev—"

He made a final attempt to rise, but suddenly pitched forward on his face. His body slowly stiffened.

Aubrey Leclair did not see him die, for he had suddenly gone blind. He groped toward the table. His foot caught on the head of Aubrey Charles. With a half-smothered cry he fell across the body of the lawyer, and a moment later he was dead.

New Mecca for Divorce Hunters

YUCATAN, known as a bolshevik state, has become a popular place for American couples seeking divorce. Several dissatisfied American couples have obtained handy divorces throught the Yucatan courts after living in the state as residents for one month. The fees are fifty dollars for an uncontested divorce and seventy-five dollars for a contested divorce, with twenty-five dollars for the lawyers' fee in each case. After establishing their residence a married couple need only appear before the court and assert that they are unable to agree or live together, and a divorce will be granted without further question, although the support of their children must be shared equally by the parting parents.

British Missionaries Slain by Chinese Bandits

REV. W. A. WHITESIDE and Rev. F. G. Watt, British missionaries of the Church Missionary society, were shot and killed by bandits when traveling in the Szechwan province, according to dispatches received in Shanghai from Meinchow recently.

Meinchow, from which a report came that two British missionaries had been slain by bandits, is near the center of Szechwan, a province in Western China bordering on Tibet. There are numerous Protestant mission stations in the vicinity of Meinchow.

The Magic Mirror

A Strange Tale

By MARY S. BROWN

IT WAS a new house which we had rented for the summer. I was alone in the large living-room, watching two kittens frolicking on the floor, when some one near me laughed softly. On one side of the room was a full length cheval mirror, and diagonally across hung a triplicate mirror.

As I turned to discover who had come in, I saw reflected in the central glass of the three-fold mirror the piquant face of a young girl who was smiling softly at the kittens. She wore a large hat of gauzy material which partly hid dark ringlets of hair that clustered around the clear olive skin, and I noticed how white and perfect were the teeth disclosed by the parted lips. Suddenly two soft dark eyes looked straight into mine. A look came over her face like that of a child caught in some naughty act, and then she disappeared.

I rushed to the door to reassure her; I ran around the house; I vaulted the stone wall at the rear and hurried along the edge of the woods. Not a glimpse of the girl did I catch.

"Hiding behind a tree," I muttered. "I won't gratify her by hunting."

I supposed she must be some neighbor's daughter, but no one in the vicinity seemed to know of any girl that answered my description, and I was beginning to forget the occurrence, when she appeared again.

This time I was playing on the violin when, in turning the music, I noticed how the triplicate mirror was reflected in the long glass near me. I dared not move for fear of frightening this mysterious maiden for whom I had so vainly inquired. So I smiled encouragingly, and said quietly:

"Come in! Do not be afraid. Can't we be friends?"

She nodded brightly, but when I turned to welcome her the room was empty. I felt annoyed, and resolved to pay no further attention to so capricious a creature. Yet, when I returned to my seat, the face in the mirror was still gazing at me sadly and appealingly.

"Are you trying to play a joke on me?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"Would you not like to be friends with me?"

An emphatic nod was her reply.

"If you will not come in and talk to me, how can we be friends?"

A puzzled look came over her face, and then the mirror was empty.

"Of all the queer girls!" I thought, and this time I went outside, walked to the end of the piazza, and came back as mystified as ever.

"That glass is certainly bewitched," I said, thinking of the enchanted ones in my child-time fairy books. Suddenly fingers appeared in it, holding a slip of paper.

"Shades of Julius Cæsar!" I ejaculated, "This house must be haunted, but, whether fairy or spirit, she doesn't look very formidable. I will see how far I can unravel the mystery."

I went nearer to the glass and read: *"I can come so that you can see me, only in this way."*

Evidently she could hear and comprehend, so I said aloud: "Is it because you won't or can't?"

The paper disappeared, and soon another took its place. It read: *"Because I can't."*

"Can you explain why?"

For answer she herself appeared and sadly shook her head. Now that she was nearer I saw that was very attractive. Her face was thoughtful, and her eyes, which had been merry as she watched the kittens, now startled me with their sadness. Impulsively, I advanced, desiring her to feel sure of my friendliness, but when I came close to the mirror her face disappeared, and I saw only the reflection of my own.

"I don't believe you really want to be friends," I exclaimed, somewhat angrily, and, turning away, I left the room.

THE stone wall behind the house divided our land from that of Professor Dolber, the world-renowned scientist. As he was called a recluse I was much pleased to be invited there a few days later for luncheon.

In the dining-room I was at first so engrossed in my host's conversation and in the subtle melancholy of his face that I was oblivious to anything else. At last I noticed two oil paintings on my right, and was much surprised to find in one a portrait of the girl in my mirror.

As the professor followed my gaze, I remarked: "That is a fine likeness, only now she looks older and more thoughtful."

He gave me a curious look, but said nothing.

"How old was she then?" I asked.

"Do you mean my daughter?" he said. "That was painted in Holland four years ago."

"Your daughter? I am glad to discover who she is. I hope we shall meet. I know we both like kittens."

His amazed stare checked me. I bit my lip in vexation. It occurred to me that he would scarcely approve of his daughter's coming alone to see me, so I changed the subject and began discussing a new scientific discovery.

When I reached home the daughter of the Episcopal rector was calling on my sister. This young lady was much interested in my good fortune in finding Mr. Dolber so sociable. Although he had many distinguished visitors from all parts of the world, she said he was a man whom strangers found it difficult to approach.

"Do you know his daughter?" I asked.

"His daughter? Was a young lady there? It must have been some visitor. He has no family."

"But the portrait—he told me it was painted from his daughter."

"Yes, wasn't she a beauty? It must have been very hard for him to lose his only child, and his wife died of grief only two months later."

No wonder the man had stared at me! He must have thought me either stupid or crazy! But the mirror—I had supposed that I had found a clue, but now the affair had assumed the proportions of a real mystery. How could I ever solve it?

The next morning the family went off on a week's excursion. I had intended to go with them, but now I changed my mind, hoping that their absence would give me a better chance to see more of my uninvited guest who haunted the mirror.

The next day, when I began my music, I was conscious of her presence even before I saw her face in the glass. There was one curious fact in regard to this. I looked directly at the triplicate mirror and saw nothing. It was only when I saw its reflection in the long cheval mirror that she became visible—just as if it required a four-fold reflection to enable the image to become apparent to my sight. This time the face was partly covered by a paper on which was written:

"Do not come too near. You were angry last time because you thought I had gone, but you came so close that you could not see me, although I had not moved."

"Forgive me," I said contritely, as the paper disappeared, leaving in full view the pretty face. "I will be careful. My people are away, so we can have a talk and get acquainted. I saw your portrait at your father's and I know who you are, so I stayed at home today because I hoped you would come again. We can talk quite well, for I can ask questions and you can answer by 'yes' or 'no' with your head, or you can write. First: Why do you come here?"

"I go to many places, for I am very lonely, but you are the only person that has seen me for two years. I was frightened at first, but when you offered to be friends I was glad. I have wanted a friend so long."

"You poor child! Can't you find friends anywhere else?"

She shook her head sadly.

"Can you tell me the reason?"

"Because I can neither come back nor go on," she wrote.

AT THIS moment the door-bell rang. It proved to be a college chum unexpectedly in the neighborhood, and I could do no less than invite him to spend Sunday with me.

Often in the lulls of conversation I pondered on that strange answer: *"I can neither come back nor go on."* What could she have meant by that? And for the first time since I had known him I was glad when my chum left and I was free to watch for my new-found friend again.

I waited nearly all the afternoon before she came, and then I reproached her for her lateness.

"I have been here several times," she wrote, *"but you were not alone, and today I was very busy."*

"Busy! What were you doing?"

"Trimming a hat," she replied, to my astonishment, and then I noticed that she did have on a different hat.

My ghostly girl, then, was not above coquetry, so I complimented her on the new creation, and she seemed as pleased as any ordinary girl.

"Tell me why I can see you only in the mirror."

She shook her head slowly as though in doubt, and after a minute's reflection she wrote: *"I can not explain, only that I am higher than you and you can not find the direction."*

"How, then, can I see your image in the mirror?"

"I do not understand it well myself, for I am not free from the body, but I think it is because I am permitted to get into the right angle of reflection, because they are sorry for me and they are trying to help me."

"What astonishing philosophy is this!" I mused. "What can she mean?"

Aloud I asked, "Who do you mean by they?"

"The ones higher up that take care of me—and, oh, will you tell my father that they take GOOD care of me?—only I am lonely because I don't belong anywhere."

"Why can't your father see you?"

"I do not know, but perhaps he can explain it all to you; he knows so much more than I do; but will you be sure to tell him for me, because he has grieved so every day, and he is so unhappy. They are calling me now and I must go. Promise me to tell him."

I promised, and instantly the mirror was empty. I was left to meditate on what she had said. She was not yet free from her body. How then could she be a spirit? Was it a dream I was living or was I becoming insane?

I sat down at once and sent a note to her father, asking if I could see him on a matter of importance, and received the reply: "Come this evening at seven-thirty."

WHEN I said I wished to speak of his daughter, Mr. Dolber answered, "No, no, I cannot talk about her. You spoke the other day as if you had met her, but how and where?"

"Listen to my story, which only you can explain."

Several times as I told of my experiences with the mirror he started as if most excited, but restrained himself until I had finished, when he rose and holding on to his chair as if to steady himself said:

"Thank you for coming. The message is a relief and comfort to me, but tonight"—his voice faltered—"I must think—this has overcome me. I will send for you soon and explain what I can."

Early in the morning I received a telephone message from Hugelschon, asking me to come over at once. I found everything there in confusion. Professor Dolber had been found dead in the library. His physician had just come and pronounced it heart failure. As I was the last person to see him, and as on the table there was a letter addressed to me, I was sent for.

As soon as the doctor had gone the housekeeper begged me to come into the library. She told me she had been in the family for thirty years and that since his wife's death he had taken her into his confidence and had depended upon her in many ways.

"Something entirely upset him last night," she added, "for when I took in some tea as I often did when he sat up late, his head was buried in his hands, andwhen I spoke he did not look up nor answer."

I decided to tell her of my experience and what I had said to the professor, and to ask her advice. As I told my story she did not seem in the least surprised.

"I am glad you told me about this, for many things of a strange nature have happened here since Freda disappeared, and Mr. Dolber allowed no one but me to enter her room. All her things were kept just as she had left them, only many of them had to be replaced. That is the strange part of it and what worried my master most of all. In fact, night or day, he had no peace of mind for fear she might need something he couldn't remember. Ah, my poor master—my heart ached for him, and I am glad he is at rest." Here she broke down and sobbed bitterly.

When she was calm I asked: "What do you mean by things being replaced?"

"I mean that her clothes, hats, dresses, and many other things disappear. And we have to buy new ones." She lowered her voice. "We are sure that Freda takes them, for everything is kept locked and no one but ourselves has gone in there since she disappeared. It is all a mystery to me, but I never questioned Mr. Dolber, though he trusted me, and I bought new things as fast as he thought

(Continued on page 83)

A Short Tale of Horror

The Invisible Monster

By SONIA H. GREENE

I HAVE never heard an even approximately adequate explanation of the horror at Martin's Beach. Despite the large number of witnesses, no two accounts agree; and the testimony taken by lacal authorities contains the most amazing discrepancies.

Perhaps this haziness is natural in view of the unheard-of character of the horror itself, the almost paralytic terror of all who saw it, and the efforts made by the fashionable Wavecrest Inn to hush it up after the publicity created by Prof. Alton's article "Are Hypnotic Powers Confined to Recognized Humanity?"

Against all these obstacles I am striving to present a coherent version; for I beheld the hideous occurrence, and believe it should be known in view of the appalling possibilities it suggests. Martin's Beach is once more popular as a watering-place, but I shudder when I think of it. Indeed, I cannot look at the ocean at all now without shuddering.

Fate is not always without a sense of drama and climax, hence the terrible happening of August 8, 1922 swiftly followed a period of minor and agreeably wonder-fraught excitement at Martin's Beach. On May 17 the crew of the fishing smack *Alma* of Gloucester, under Capt. James P. Orne, killed, after a battle of nearly forty hours, a marine monster whose size and aspect produced the greatest possible stir in scientific circles and caused certain Boston naturalists to take every precaution for its taxidermical preservation.

The object was some fifty feet in length, of roughly cylindrical shape, and about ten feet in diameter. It was unmistakably a gilled fish in its major affiliations; but with certain curious modifications, such as rudimentary forelegs and six-toed feet in place of pectorial fins, which prompted the widest speculation. Its extraordinary mouth, its thick and scaly hide, and its single, deep-set eye were wonders scarcely less remarkable than its colossal dimensions; and when the naturalists pronounced it an infant organism, which could not have been hatched more than a few days, public interest mounted to extraordinary heights.

Captain Orne, with typical Yankee shrewdness, obtained a vessel large enough to hold the object in its hull, and arranged for the exhibition of his prize. With judicious carpentry he prepared what amounted to an excellent marine museum, and, sailing south to the wealthy resort district of Martin's Beach, anchored at the hotel wharf and reaped a harvest of admission fees.

The intrinsic marvelousness of the object, and the importance which it clearly bore in the minds of many scientific visitors from near and far, combined to make it the season's sensation. That it was absolutely unique—unique to a scientifically revolutionary degree—was well understood. The naturalists had shown plainly that it radically differed from the similarly immense fish caught off the Florida coast; that, while it was obviously an inhabitant of almost incredible depths, perhaps thousands of feet, its brain and principal organs indicated a development startlingly vast, and out of all proportion to anything hitherto associated with the fish tribe.

On the morning of July 20 the sensation was increased by the loss of the vessel and its strange treasure. In the storm of the preceding night it had broken from its moorings and vanished forever from the sight of man, carrying with it the guard who had slept aboard despite the threatening weather. Capt. Orne, backed by extensive scientific interests and aided by large numbers of fishing boats from Gloucester, made a thorough and exhaustive searching cruise, but with no result other than the prompting of interest and conversation. By August 7 hope was abandoned, and Capt. Orne had returned to the Wavecrest Inn to wind up his business affairs at Martin's Beach and confer with certain of the scientific men who remained there. The horror came on August 8.

IT WAS in the twilight, when grey seabirds hovered low near the shore and a rising moon began to make a glittering path across the waters. The scene is important to remember, for every impression counts. On the beach were several strollers and a few late bathers; stragglers from the distant cottage colony that rose modestly on a green hill to the north, or from the adjacent cliff-perched Inn whose imposing towers proclaimed its allegiance to wealth and grandeur.

Well within viewing distance was another set of spectators, the loungers on the Inn's high-ceiled and lantern-lighted veranda, who appeared to be enjoying the dance music from the sumptuous ballroom inside. These spectators, who included Capt. Orne and his group of scientific confreres, joined the beach group before the horror progressed far; as did many more from the Inn. Certainly there was no lack of witnesses, confused though their stories be with fear and doubt of what they saw.

There is no exact record of the time the thing began, although a majority say that the fairly round moon was "about a foot" above the low-lying vapors of the horizon. They mention the moon because what they saw seemed subtly connected with it—a sort of stealthy, deliberate, menacing ripple which rolled in from the far skyline along the shimmering lane of reflected moonbeams, yet which seemed to subside before it reached the shore.

Many did not notice this ripple until reminded by later events; but it seems to have been very marked, differing in height and motion from the normal waves around it. Some called it *cunning* and *calculating*. And as it died away craftily by the black reefs afar out, there suddenly came belching up out of that glitter-streaked brine a cry of death; a scream of anguish and despair that moved pity even while it mocked it.

First to respond to the cry were the two life guards then on duty; sturdy fellows in white bathing attire, with their calling proclaimed in large red letters across their chests. Accustomed as they were to rescue work, and to the screams of the drowning, they could find nothing familiar in this unearthly ululation; yet with a trained sense of duty they ignored the strangeness and proceeded to follow their usual course.

Hastily seizing an air-cushion, which with its attached coil of rope lay always at hand, one of them ran swiftly along the shore to the scene of the gathering

crowd; whence, afer whirling it about him to gain momentum, he flung the hollow disc far out in the direction from which the sound had come. As the cushion disappeared in the waves, the crowd curiously awaited a sight of the hapless being whose distress had been so great; eager to see the rescue made by the massive rope.

But that rescue was soon acknowledged to be no swift and easy matter; for, pull as they might on the rope, the two muscular guards could not move the object at the other end. Instead, they found that object pulling with equal or even greater force in the very opposite direction, till in a few seconds they were dragged off their feet and into the water by the strange power which had seized on the proffered life-preserver.

One of them, recovering himself, called immediately for help from the crowd on the shore, to whom he flung the remaining coil of rope; and in a moment the guards were seconded by all the hardier men, among whom Capt. Orne was foremost. More than a dozen strong hands were now tugging desperately at the stout line, yet wholly without avail.

Hard as they tugged, the strange force at the other end tugged harder; and since neither side relaxed for an instant, the rope became rigid as steel with the enormous strain. The struggling participants, as well as the spectators, were by this time consumed with curiosity as to the nature of the force in the sea. The idea of a drowning man had long been dismissed; and hints of whales, submarines, monsters, and demons now passed freely around. Where humanity had first led the rescuers, wonder kept them at their task; and they hauled with a grim determination to uncover the mystery.

It being decided at last that a whale must have swallowed the air cushion, Capt. Orne, as a natural leader, shouted to those on shore that a boat must be obtained in order to approach, harpoon, and land the unseen leviathan. Several men at once prepared to scatter in quest of a suitable craft, while others came to supplant the captain at the straining rope, since his place was logically with whatever boat party might be formed.

His own idea of the situation was very broad, and by no means limited to whales, since he had to do with a monster so much stranger. He wondered what might be the acts and manifestations of an adult of the species of which the fifty-foot creature had been the merest infant.

AND now there developed with appalling suddenness the crucial fact which changed the entire scene from one of wonder to one of horror, and dazed with fright the assembled band of toilers and onlookers. Capt. Orne, turning to leave his post at the rope, found his hands held in their place with unaccountable strength; and in a moment he realized that he was unable to let go of the rope. His plight was instantly divined, and as each companion tested his own situation the same condition was encountered. The fact could not be denied—every struggler was irresistibly held in some mysterious bondage to the hempen line which was slowly, hideously, and relentlessly pulling them out to sea.

Speechless horror ensued; a horror in which the spectators were petrified to utter inaction and mental chaos. Their complete demoralization is reflected in the conflicting accounts they give, and the sheepish excuses they offer for their seemingly callous inertia. I was one of them, and know.

Even the strugglers, after a few frantic screams and futile groans, succumbed to the paralyzing influence and kept silent and fatalistic in the face of unknown powers. There they stood in the pallid moonlight, blindly pulling against a spectral doom and swaying monotonously backward and forward as the water rose first to their knees, then to their hips. The moon went partly under a cloud, and in the half-light the line of swaying men resembled some sinister and gigantic centipede, writhing in the clutch of a terrible creeping death.

Harder and harder grew the rope, as the tug in both directions increased, and the strands swelled with the undisturbed soaking of the rising waves. Slowly the tide advanced, till the sands so lately peopled by laughing children and whispering lovers were now swallowed by the inexorable flow. The herd of panic-stricken watchers surged blindly backward as the water crept above their feet, while the frightful line of strugglers swayed hideously on, half submerged, and now at a substantial distance from their audience. Silence was complete.

The crowd, having gained a huddling-place beyond reach of the tide, stared in mute fascination; without offering a word of advice or encouragement, or attempting any kind of assistance. There was in the air a nightmare fear of impending evils such as the world had never before known.

MINUTES seemed lengthened into hours, and still that human snake of swaying torsos was seen above the fast rising tide. Rhythmically it undulated; slowly, horribly, with the seal of doom upon it. Thicker clouds now passed over the ascending moon, and the glittering path on the waters faded nearly out.

Very dimly writhed the serpentine line of nodding heads, with now and then the livid face of a backward-glancing victim gleaming pale in the darkness. Faster and faster gathered the clouds, till at length their angry rifts shot down sharp tongues of febrile flame. Thunders rolled, softly at first, yet soon increasing to a deafening, maddening intensity. Then came a culminating crash—a shock whose reverberations seemed to shake land and sea alike—and on its heels a cloudburst whose drenching violence overpowered the darkened world as if the heavens themselves had opened to pour forth a vindictive torrent.

The spectators, instinctively acting despite the absence of conscious and coherent thought, now retreated up the cliff steps to the hotel veranda. Rumors had reached the guests inside, so that the refugees found a state of terror nearly equal to their own. I think a few frightened words were uttered, but cannot be sure.

Some, who were staying at the Inn, retired in terror to their rooms; while others remained to watch the fast sinking victims as the line of bobbing heads showed above the mounting waves in the fitful lightning flashes. I recall thinking of those heads, and the bulging eyes they must contain; eyes that might well reflect all the fright, panic, and delirium of a malignant universe—all the sorrow, sin, and misery, blasted hopes and unfulfilled desires, fear, loathing and anguish, of the ages since time's beginning; eyes alight with all the soul-racking pain of eternally blazing infernos.

And as I gazed out beyond the heads, my fancy conjured up still another eye; a single eye, equally alight, yet with a purpose so revolting to my brain that the vision soon passed. Held in the clutches of an unknown vise, the line of the damned dragged on; their silent screams and unuttered prayers known only to the demons of the black waves and the night-wind.

There now burst from the infuriate sky such a mad cataclysm of satanic sound that even the former crash seemed dwarfed. Amidst a blinding glare of descending fire the voice of heaven resounded with the blasphemies of hell, and the mingled agony of all the lost reverberated in one apocalyptic, planet-rending peal of Cyclopean din. It was the

(Continued on page 83)

The Pebble Prophecy

A Hallowe'en Story

By VALENS LAPSLEY

IT HAPPENED on Hallowe'en, the time of year which sanctions a brilliant celebration, and a holiday celebration with us was always an event and a happy one.

We usually entertained at such times, not only for the evening but for the afternoon as well, for as we live outside the city, many of our friends had to come a long distance, and those who had not seen each other for some time counted on a reunion of congenial souls.

There were some, of course, who could not come for the afternoon, but those who did, came early, so immediately after lunch we were awaiting the arrival of those who were to join in a paper chase. This was to be followed, upon our return, by an immense bonfire which we were to build to foretell our futures by the pebble prophecy.

Many of our expected guests had never heard before of the ancient Hallowe'en custom of placing pebbles on the ground and then building a fire over them to learn of life or death. As the legend had it, should a pebble be at all disturbed by the heat or falling embers, death would surely follow within the year for the person who placed that pebble.

Solemn rites and ceremonies were performed by many of the younger ones as they, with mock gravity, placed their pebbles in such positions as they believed perfectly safe from disturbance. We built the bonfire with as much care as if it were to endure instead of being destroyed. Soon the flames were shooting through the leafy branches which were piled on top, and the foliage crisping at their touch flashed into still more brilliant hues and vanished far above in thin air.

As we watched the soaring blaze, our spirits soared also. We laughed, we sang, we crowned one another with autumn leaves. One and all, with buoyant step, danced round the fire, hand in hand, madly gay in the flush of exuberant spirits, until the flames began to burn low and dinner time drew near. Then we betook ourselves, still singing and laughing, into the house.

The afternoon had been dark and gloomy. As we were assembling for dinner, one of the guests suggested that, as the weather was becoming more threatening we should go and look for the pebbles before we dined. This was heartily approved, for, if after dinner it should be too dark to find them, our labor would have been in vain and our futures still be in doubt.

We were very merry as we sallied forth to the scene of our late frolic. Some of the embers were already dead, some glowed dimly red, others gave forth tiny spirals of smoke, and, gleaming here and there, were leaping darts of blue and crimson. It was a pretty sight. Who could guess that beneath it all lay a prophecy of a tragedy?

It was an easy matter to find most of the pebbles. Each knew exactly where he had placed his and went directly there. Shouts and laughter were heard on all sides as various ones on finding and trying to pick up their pebbles, dropped them quickly from scorched fingers.

Their evident relief at finding the pebbles safe amused me. Had they taken this thing seriously? As I listened to them I uncovered the place where I had so carefully planted my pebble—an odd-shaped piece of quartz which I had chosen because it could be more easily identified.

It was not there. I gently stirred the embers and ashes surrounding the spot, becoming more and more excited as I failed to locate it. It was not there!

Where was it? Who could have taken it?

The others joined in my search, but we had to give it up as useless. It was not until my friends began to ask me jokingly for any instructions I might have for the elaborate funeral they would surely give me, that the full meaning came over me with sudden force. My blood grew cold in spite of my would-be disbelief; a sickening shiver ran through my veins even while I told myself it was foolishness to imagine that such a prophecy could be fulfilled.

With youthful thoughtlessness my friends increased their tormenting, going into dreadful and painful details. It seemed to me they would never cease, though they surely could see they were making me suffer. Thought and feeling were so confused within me that if I had tried to give them utterance I could have only screamed. My nerves contracted; my head swam giddily, and I felt that my death warrant had been signed.

Then a cord seemed to snap in my brain. Why shoul I be frightened? I had never been superstitious before; why should I be now? I held a bachelor of science degree from a leading university and had always scoffed at anything bordering upon superstition, yet I was allowing this trifling custom of an ancient time to bother me. To be upset over such a simple incident was nonsense. I would forget all about it and at once.

It was a relief when we were summoned to dinner; and by throwing myself heart and soul into the merriment, where music, laughter and mirth—real and unreal—were mixed together in one harmonious whole, I soon forgot the prophecy of the pebbles.

AFTER dinner our spacious rooms were rapidly filled. Sounds of merry voices and laughter were heard on all sides, and old and young mingled joyously in every old-time Hallowe'en antic and prank of which we had ever heard. I was my normal self again. Never had I been in higher spirits.

Late in the evening some one made the suggestion that we sit in the firelight and tell stories. This was greeted with applause. Everyone was called on in turn to contribute his share of the story telling. Fairy tales and tales of adventure followed one another, but all these were nothing compared to the tales of ghosts and apparitions that succeeded.

There was a wonderful fire in the cavernous old fireplace. The mighty logs, glowing with warmth, were almost hidden by sticks of pine and hickory which were sputtering and crackling with good cheer. The blood-red glare flashed on the faces of those nearest the hearth,

while the countenances of those farther back only now and then received a casual gleam as a curl of flame darted out into the room. The light threw a shimmering luster of a ruddy hue on the dark wainscoting. The stories had a new zest, told in such an atmosphere and in the drowsy or sepulchral tones with which people talk in the firelight.

It was just the night for such tales—the very witching time of night. The wind blew and howled around the corners of the house; everything within breathed of sorcery and enchantment.

A rather oppressive pause followed a blood-curdling tale, and, to break it, I asked my grandmother to tell some of the weird stories connected with a certain Dame Walcott, who used to sit before that very fireplace a long time ago. My grandmother gladly assented. She told these tales exceedingly well for in her younger days they were often repeated in the neighborhood round the winter evening's fire.

The main part of our house is colonial and was built by Dame Walcott's father. A portrait of the old woman, which had been in the house when my great-grandparents took possession of it, had long since been banished to the lumber-room where it still remained.

Dame Walcott was reported to have had the supernatural power of making others perform acts in imitation of her own, and had been one of the first accused of witchcraft in the colonies. Although she was neither tried nor condemned as a witch, that Puritan of Puritans, Endicott himself, had denounced her, and she found the sentiment against her so strong that she was supposed to have preferred death to life.

They had found her body in the lumber-room. Just what had caused her death had always remained a mystery, for those were not the days when an unusual death was widely reported or active inquiry made into it. Murder could not have been committed, for the door and windows were securely fastened on the inside. There was no indication of poisoning, and the only bruises on the body were some dark spots like finger marks on her throat.

It was very late when my grandmother had finished her stories and the guests began at once to make preparations for departure. When the outside door was opened a furious blast of wind rushed in and drove whirling sleet far down the hall. To go any distance in such a storm would be almost impossible, so we urged our friends to remain until morning.

Although our house is large, our guests were many, and our sleeping accommodations were taxed to the utmost. My room had also to be given up, so I gathered some bedding together, intending to pass what remained of the night on a discarded cot in the lumber-room. I was surprised when my mother strenuously objected. She seemed worried and spoke with an agitation not quite unmixed with anger. I laughingly assured her there was nothing to fear, kissed her and bade her "Good-night."

THERE is no electric light in the lumber-room, so I lighted a small oil lamp which we keep for emergencies. When I had set this lamp on a chest in my lonely quarters, I saw before me the dingy old portrait of Dame Walcott gazing down from the canvas with an expression which seemed to mock at me as the fitful light illumined it. The little green eyes seemed to see everything I did and to watch every movement I made.

The physiognomy of the old dame had struck me more than once, just as it would anyone who liked to study human faces best for what they tell of life's experiences. Her eyes had a vague yet answering gaze, and there was a peculiar smile which age made appear like an ugly film hovering about her lips.

The picture fascinated me. The longer I studied it, the more the face seemed to take on an animated expression, as if her soul, long stifled in a cold and narrow prison, was unfolding and developing gradually into full consciousness.

I should have considerable difficulty in expressing the thoughts which passed through my mind during the scrutiny of this portrait, as I sought for a consciousness of unity between the past and the present. Had the old dame really been a witch? Had she really lured people to death? How had she done it? Had she possessed the power of hypnotism?

I stepped back from the portrait. The lamp on the chest managed with diabolical art to cast its shadows so that at a short distance nothing could be seen but what now appeared to me a sinister face. This combined with the storm of the night, the rattle of the loose-fitting windows, and the shadows everywhere, were well prepared to fill me with a strange and creepy sensation.

Never before had I felt so lonely nor so cheerless. A sense of isolation oppressed and weighed me down. I knew that a breath of fresh air would help me throw off my depression and my morbid thoughts. I opened a window. A magnificent storm was raging.

I heard not a sound nor a sigh beside the wind which whistled shrilly through the trees with impatient haste, as though longing to escape from their gaunt and most untempting embraces. There was in it all a poetic element that stirred the very depths of my being and filled me with a sense of music and harmony, driving out for the moment, all thought of fear. I took several invigorating breaths, intending then to close the window and retire as quickly as possible. Yet—in spite of all this inspiration and determination, my dread returned and I felt that something strange and sinister surrounded me.

A strong presentiment came over me without any visible or audible cause. Obeying an impulse, I swung round and looked, and I knew even as I turned, why I did so—there was some intruder present.

The room was large and the pieces of furniture stored there caused much of it to be in black shadow. It would have been a good place for children to play "Hide and Seek." Any one hiding in the room at night would most certainly have escaped detection, and while I was unable to see anything out of the ordinary, I knew and felt that there was a living presence in the room. It was this sense of danger that had made me turn from the window.

I listened intently, rigidly still. I could hear nothing but the raging storm and the pulsing of my blood, yet I clearly felt someone's presence.

I waited, terror-stricken. After a moment, which seemed to contain a dayful of hours so terrible was its length, I heard a faint sound. The light in most of the room was dim and uncertain, and shadows threw their obscurity between, yet I felt sure I saw something opposite me, a darker spot in the darkness.

My straining eyes soon saw the darker shadow take on shape, a figure appearing dim and unsubstantial as if it were molded of darkness and gray light. At that moment a breath of wind came through the open window, causing the light to flicker, throwing dancing shadows all around the room. A shaft of light touched the dark mass, giving it the outline of a human form.

A HUNDRED questions seemed to pass through my mind at once. Was I being made the victim of a cruel joke? Could it be a burglar—a creature of actual flesh and blood? Could it be some unearthly visitor, some specter forced back by mystic art from another world?

I tried to speak—to scream—but my parched tongue was glued to the roof of my mouth. I stood there in a frigid trance of speechless terror. I could not utter a sound, though crying for help could not have brought me aid. The door was closed and the howling storm would have drowned my voice.

I had seen this thing that lurked in the shadow. Had it seen me? I pulled myself back nearer the window, trembling with fear, afraid of something I could not recognize, and hoping against hope that it did not know I was there.

Then came the horrible thought. Could it be some victim of Dame Walcott, forced to rise and haunt the place where it had met its untimely end? Some soul that lived in another world or state when our world thought him dead? If he had risen from a sealed tomb, what could he be seeking here?

I tried to pray as my mind flashed back to tales I had heard and read of the spirits of the murdered who were compelled to revisit the scenes of their death until their murders had been avenged, and all the stories of ghosts and goblins that I had heard in the evening now came crowding upon my recollection.

The shadow moved. This, then, was no hallucination, no trick of strained eyesight. I felt that I was in the presence of something that could not only frighten but could actually harm.

I tried to call my bewildered wits to my aid; and, calming the frenzy of my thoughts by a strong effort, I determined to try getting out of the room, and believed that by keeping in the shadow and close to the wall I could make my escape through the door. Scarcely had I taken one step when the shadow turned in my direction. To turn and fly now was too late. All I could do was wait.

Slowly the shadowy form came toward me. As it came into the full glare of the light I saw that it was Dame Walcott with her head bent upon her breast. I recoiled in wide-eyed horror from this terrifying spectacle.

No one can ever know what I suffered as I waited—waited until she should reach me. There flashed across my mind the pebble prophecy. Was I, too, to be a victim of Dame Walcott? Was the prophecy to be a true one? Was it to be fulfilled the very night it was made, carried out by a specter risen from the dead?

Very slowly she raised her head. Very slowly our eyes met. Very slowly, like some jungle panther, she glided toward me until she stood directly in front of me. She pointed at me jeeringly. Her whole face became animated with a sudden glow of fiendish triumph. Her eyes glistened with a malign expression.

I met her gaze fully, absorbing into my innermost soul the mesmeric spell. I imitated everything she did, though vainly striving to prevent it. It had been difficult for others to oppose her; it was impossible for me.

She clasped her hands about her throat. Unable to resist, I imitated her. Tighter and tighter did my hands close. I was unable to loosen them. It seemed as though they were being controlled by some inexplicable power.

She extended her right arm, slowly opening her hand. In it could be plainly seen something which glimmered faintly in the light.

She described a circle in the air with a perfectly even and majestic motion. The light caught the object in her hand and it gleamed like a living coal. As she did this her eyes looked straight into mine, held steadily for a moment, then dropped to the object in her hand.

My gaze followed hers, and I recognized my pebble of quartz which had disappeared from the bonfire.

EVERYTHING gradually became dark about me. I had a convulsion of terror. My tongue was frozen, my teeth clenched. A film settled upon my eyes, a dull faintness overpowered me. Every vestige of strength deserted me, an icy spasm contracted my heart.

Uttering an inarticulate cry, I made a last violent effort to free myself from the spell that held me as I felt the shadow of death creeping over me. Then I sank face downward upon the floor.

I do not know how long I lay in this death-like swoon. Familiar faces were all about me when I was restored to consciousness. I looked around in bewilderment. Where was I? How came I to be there? Suddenly I remembered and swooned again.

When the hot and terrible delirium which followed had burned itself out, my loved ones told me the part they had taken in my Hallowe'en experiences. I had no need to tell them mine. They had heard it all in the ravings of my illness.

My mother had been both angry and anxious because I had refused to heed her, and was unable to sleep. She wakened my father and insisted that he go with her to do what he could to persuade me to spend the remainder of the night on the sofa in their room.

On reaching the lumber-room, they found the lamp burning, a window open and the cot unslept in, and in searching for me, found me at the base of the portrait, apparently dead, with some ugly black finger marks on my throat. In my stiff, rigidly clasped hands something gleamed white and shining. It was the quartz pebble.

An alarm was sounded. Soon voices and steps were heard in the corridor and the room was ablaze with light. Friends rushed in, rubbing their eyes, still half asleep, questioning each other as to what had happened.

My grandmother appeared on the threshold, full of astonishment at the sudden disturbance. She stopped short, with a wild cry which rang through the whole house: "Dame Walcott! Where is she?"

All looked to where the portrait had stood against the wall. The frame was still there, but the figure within it was gone. Like a cloud melting in thin air, or a ghost vanishing into the nether world, she had mysteriously disappeared.

Masterpieces of Weird Fiction

The Tell-Tale Heart

By EDGAR ALLAN POE

TRUE!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen *me*. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently! have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out—"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it *was* the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with it dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. *All in vain;* because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the board so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knock-

(Continued on page 83)

A Vivid Series of Fact Articles

WEIRD CRIMES

No. 2. The Grave Robbers

By SEABURY QUINN

THE thief who would "steal the pennies off a dead man's eyes" is proverbially the meanest crook in the world.

Judged by present-day standards, he is also a piker; for, with post-war inflation, like everything else, mortuary thievery has increased its ante.

Robbing the dead, or, more accurately, stealing from the bereaved, is so mean a form of crime that it is, fortunately, seldom met with. Yet a few crooks have specialized in this despicable thievery and found it—while it lasted—exceedingly remunerative.

Late in 1921 and early in 1922 the police of Chicago began to receive complaints from recently bereaved residents of the city's West Side. The articles stolen varied in kind and value, but the circumstances surrounding the crimes were invariably the same. A family which had lost a member would attend the interment, and when they returned they found their home had been burglarized and rifled of every valuable of an easily portable nature.

For three months this funeral burglar carried his flashlight and jimmy in the wake of death in Chicago's West Side. More than fifteen complaints were lodged with the authorities—and the burglaries went merrily on.

At last the police department decided to set a trap for the thief. Special officers were detailed to the case, and when a prominent resident died they asked permission to attend the funeral services.

When the friends and mourners had entered the waiting limousines and driven off to the cemetery the officers remained behind. Scarcely had the last motor in the funeral procession disappeared when the telephone began to ring imperatively. The officers glanced significantly at each other and let the bell continue to jangle.

Five minutes passed. Again the 'phone rang, and again the officers ignored it. Another five minutes, and the telephone rang again, longer this time, as if the party on the line were urging central to make an extra effort to get the family. Again the detectives remained mute.

Hardly enough time to allow a rapid walker to travel from the corner drug store to the residence elapsed before the police heard the sharp *click* of a rear window being forced, and a neatly-dress young man stepped briskly from the butler's pantry to the dining-room, making with unerring instinct for the sideboard where the family silver was stored.

At the station house he gave his name as Benjamin Shermerkey, aged twenty-one, and admitted being the perpetrator of the series of burglaries which had cost bereaved Chicagoans thousands of dollars.

His system, he told the police, was a simple one. Each morning he searched the obituary columns in the daily papers. When the names of people living in prosperous sections of the city appeared, he made careful note of the day and hour of the funeral, noting whether services be from the home, church or undertaking establishment.

After allowing a reasonable time for the obsequies, he would ring up the family residence. If anyone answered, he would announce himself as a friend of the deceased and offer condolences. Then, after another interval, he would call again. If he received another answer he would repeat the farce of tendering sympathy, and bide his time.

When his telephone call was finally unanswered, or if his first ring brought no response, he would go to the house, force a window and make off with silverware, jewelry and anything else easily carried. His genteel appearance averted suspicion, even if he were seen leaving a prosperous neighborhood with a bundle.

A speedy trial followed, and residents of Chicago's West Side will have to defer the doubtful pleasure of entertaining Mr. Shermerkey until he has exhausted the hospitality of Joliet Penitentiary.

AN attempt to practice the same specialty was nipped almost in the bud in New York early in 1922. Samuel Deutsch, a four-times offender against the New York burglary statute, was caught red-handed by a young woman who happened to remain in the house to "straighten up" the rooms while the family was attending the burial of a deceased relative at Woodlawn Cemetery.

When discovered, Deutsch told the young lady, "It's all right; I'm the undertaker."

"You're a thief!" replied the courageous girl, and grabbed him, calling loudly for help at the same time. He shook her off, but was captured before he left the block.

"You've got me right," he admitted to the policemen. "I used to look up the obits., and when I seen a bunch of 'em in the same neighborhood, I'd grab me jimmy an' do me stuff."

Had Deutsch used Shermerkey's precaution of telephoning, the chances are he would still be at liberty. As it is, he had been made very comfortable in his old cell at Sing Sing, where he will continue for twenty years, less time off for good behavior.

No less ingenious, and decidedly safer for its perpetrator, was the scheme conceived by Samuel F. Ware, a negro undertaker of Atlanta, Georgia, for mulcting relatives of persons he had buried.

Ware's plan had for its basis the principle of the "Indian gift." He would sell a casket, then steal it back again.

Doctors' and undertakers' mistakes, and often their profits, are usually permanently screened from public view by several cubic feet of earth, and Ware's dereliction might have gone unsuspected indefinitely had it not been for his desire to secure the last split-cent of profit from his perfidy.

An expensive casket might be sold, stolen back and resold two or three times, but after its fourth or fifth interment it began to look shopworn. A little time and expense spent in refinishing it would

have made it a readily merchantable commodity once more, but Ware was averse even to this small overhead chargeable against his profits. Accordingly, he employed an emissary to canvass the smaller funeral supply houses, offering high-grade caskets at prices attractively below the usual wholesale.

One of these traveling salesmen approached the Southern Undertaking Supply & Sales Company, of Jacksonville, and told them a certain Atlanta undertaker was prepared to furnish them a limited number of fine caskets at a price far below that of the manufacturers. So low, indeed, were the prices quoted that the company's secretary became suspicious, and communicated his suspicions to Police Chief Beavers of Atlanta.

Chief Beavers also suspected that all was not as it should be, and detailed two plain-clothes men to investigate these bargain-counter caskets.

South View Cemetery is the principal negro burying ground of Atlanta, and it was here the detectives began their quest. Nothing untoward was apparent. The place presented the usual hodgepodge of expensive monuments and neglected graves common to all negro cemeteries in the South. The wind soughed dolefully through the Lombardy poplars, birds twittered and quarreled in the branches. A pair of negro grave-diggers plied their mournful trade in the unyielding yellow clay.

"We'll just stick around tonight and see what happens," one of the detectives said. The other agreed, and after a cursory inspection of the grave yard and a few formal questions to the grave diggers, the sleuths left.

That night they posted themselves behind the fence, where they could get a full view of several new and flower-decked graves. Toward morning an undertaker's motor casket wagon drove to the cemetery gate, was admitted, and chugged its way to the new section of the grave yard. Three men, armed with maddocks and spades, alighted, carefully removed the floral pieces from a grave and commenced to dig.

Tense with excitement, the detectives saw the trio unearth an expensive casket, tumble the body back into the grave, replace the earth and flowers, then drive off with the burial case for which several hundred dollars had recently been paid.

Drawing their revolvers, the detectives barred the wagon's passage. The occupants attempted to run them down, but the sight of the officers' guns and shields, coupled with the fact they were white men, dampened their ardor for the exploit. They surrendered.

When the officers inspected their catch they found they had taken Samuel F. Ware, president of a prosperous negro undertaking company, and Thurman Jones and Claude Maddox, grave diggers in the cemetery's employ.

A FEW days after Ware's duplicity became known in Atlanta, the traditional belief that colored people in the South always give cemeteries a wide berth exploded with an impressive *bang*. Scores of enraged colored residents of the city whose dead had been interred in South View Cemetery, armed with picks, shovels, hoes, rakes—any sort of delving instrument they could find—descended upon the peaceful God's Acre and began a personal investigation of their relatives' graves.

The first grave opened was that of Nancy Joy, one time belle of Auburn Avenue. Her casket was gone. It was found in the next grave to be explored, that of a negro man. Ware had stolen it after burying Nancy and resold it to the man's family. For some reason—perhaps because he had not yet gotten round to it—he had not stolen that particular casket a second time.

As each grave was opened new wailings and moanings arose until it seemed the cemetery was witnessing a gigantic multiple funeral, each part of which was equipped with a large and demonstrative corps of mourners.

For a time it appeared that the cemetery would be bereft of its dead; but after striving futilely to calm the excited negroes, the cemetery authorities sent for the police, who put an abrupt stop to the impromptu investigation.

Ware, Jones and Maddox were indicted by the Fulton county grand jury shortly afterwards, the indictment charging violation of Section 408 of the state penal code, which prescribes a maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment for the wanton removal of a body from its grave.

A novel defense was outlined, the contention being that the caskets alleged to be stolen were really rented. The suggestion of this remarkable defense, involving the psychology of the "fine funeral" was made by one of the grave diggers arrested with Ware.

"Ware told us," he said, "that he wasn't stealing those caskets. He said he had just rented them to the families so they could make a big show of having a fine funeral. He said his customers had agreed to let him put the bodies in plain boxes afterward, and take back the expensive caskets so he could rent them to other people."

The caskets were removed under cover of darkness, it was explained, so that nobody would know of Ware's arrangement with his patrons.

There was no indication of such an understanding, however, among the negroes who had thronged South View Cemetery when Ware's operations were being unofficially investigated. Neither was there any evidence of rental agreements when his case came on for trial before the petit jury. A verdict of guilty was quickly arrived at, and the miscreant who had betrayed his patrons' trust received a sentence of the extreme penalty provided by the statute—ten years' imprisonment at hard labor.

The Third Article in This Absorbing Series Will Appear in an Early Issue of WEIRD TALES

THE MAGIC MIRROR

(Continued from page 74)

she needed them. But, sir, perhaps he has explained. Here is the letter he left for you."

I walked home sad and troubled. Finding my family away still, I sat down where I was wont to see her face in the mirror. I wondered if she would come again, but first I must read the letter, and I began to unfold it, when suddenly I felt the strange sensation I always experienced when I became conscious of her presence. I raised my eyes involuntarily to the mirror, and there—and I confess for the first time in my life that I was afraid—there, instead of Freda, was Mr. Dolber himself!

He smiled as if to reassure me, a smile so glad that the fear left me, and I was sure he had a message. I was right, for in a moment the writing came:

"Hurry at once to Hugelschon and go to Freda's room."

Then the mirror was empty, nor did I ever see in it anything but the reflection of material objects.

I NEVER thought of disobeying the command, so I hurried to Hugelschon. The housekeeper met me, saying excitedly, "I was just going to send for you. Come with me."

She led me upstairs to Freda's room and unlocked the door. We entered, and she locked it again on the inside—and then, to my wondering amazement and joy, I saw the reason for her caution, and for his message in the mirror. Freda herself lay on the bed apparently fast asleep. The housekeeper bent over her, and in a voice of mingled delight and fear, exclaimed, "Oh, what shall I do?"

She voiced my own feelings. How could we account for Freda's appearance? We must act quickly. Would the letter help us? I drew the envelope from my pocket, and read:

"For years I have been investigating every phenomenon that seemed in any way to suggest the presence of a higher space, adjacent to that in which we live. The record of my experiments and their results fills volumes. It is enough to say that I succeeded so well in my investigations that I became able to place objects, even animals, within this space. These objects were always connected with my experimenting table by tubes containing powerful magnetic currents, by means of which I could bring back anything within range of my vision again. The idea at last came to me that if I could find an intelligent being, willing in the interest of scientific knowledge to co-operate with me, my discovery would be famous. Such a being, if sent into the invisible space, and reclaimed again into our own, would not only immortalize my fame, but also prove my theories by his testimony. . . ."

Here the writing abruptly ended. We could only conjecture the rest. He had undoubtedly used Freda as his "intelligent being." She had trusted him, but he had failed to re-attract her sufficiently for her to become visible again. Possibly a human being required more forceful power than he had calculated. Hence the grief which had caused the mother's death and his own torturing remorse. Death must have shown him the way to release her, and he had used the mirror as a medium of communication. He had believed that I would do my best to help Freda, nor was he wrong.

The only time we spoke of her curious experiences, Freda said: "It is not very clear to me now. I know that my father raised the rate of vibration in my body, so that it became invisible to people on this plane, but his formula for bringing me back refused to work—to his tragic dismay. While I was in this higher, or perhaps more inclusive, space, it became clear to me that nothing is ever really destroyed. It only changes its form, as ice becomes water, water turns into steam, and steam into an invisible gas; the elements vibrate differently, and each varying vibration has its own individual form. That is as much as I can explain in terms that you could understand."

Be that as it may, the mirror still reflects my Freda—and I am content. Who now, however, shall prove Professor Dolber's theory of the fourth dimension? I, for one, dare not try.

THE INVISIBLE MONSTER

(Continued from page 76)

end of the storm, for with uncanny suddenness the rain ceased and the moon once more cast her pallid beams on a strangely quieted sea.

There was no line of bobbing heads now. The waters were calm and deserted, and broken only by the fading ripples of what seemed to be a whirlpool far out in the path of the moonlight whence the strange cry had first come. But as I looked along that treacherous lane of silvery sheen, with fancy fevered and senses overwrought, there trickled upon my ears from some abysmal sunken waste the faint and sinister echoes of a laugh.

THE TELL-TALE HEART

(Continued from page 80)

ing at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart—for what had I *now* to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled—for *what* had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search *well*. I led them, at length to *his* chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My *manner* had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct:—it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness—until, at length, I found that the noise was *not* within my ears.

No doubt I now grew *very* pale—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was *a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton.* I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder!* And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *know!*—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!*

"Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!"

SAVED FROM FIERY DEATH BY LOCOMOTIVE BELL

Max O. Knorr, a railroad worker, was awakened at night by a locomotive bell. He found his home in flames. Thirty seconds after he led the five members of his family from the burning building, the walls suddenly careened and the roof collapsed, enveloped in flames.

DRACONDA

(Continued from page 17)

remarkable albedo—placed by Muller at ninety-two per cent!

The X in the phenomenon, there can be little doubt, must lie hidden in some peculiar composition, or perhaps unknown constituent, of the atmosphere.

But an end to speculation, or this (awful thought) will read like a scientific treatise, instead of what it is—a narrative of unparalleled but *sober* fact.

The *Hornet* continued on, drawing northward as well as in toward the surface. At length—we were then but a thousand miles or so up—the midday point was attained, and then it was that our descent into the Venusian world began.

We had issued at last from the terrible depths of space: but what awaited us in these other deeps—these deeps into which we were now descending?

Astounding Things Happen in the Second Installment of this Fascinating Novel. You Will Find the Second Installment in the Next Issue of WEIRD TALES.

THE CLOSED ROOM

(Continued from page 31)

but to his mystification he found none. He groped for the revolver. All its chambers were loaded.

He gave a quick sigh of relief, and then, without a moment's hesitation, he carried Norman's body back to the study and placed it in the chair in front of the fireplace. Next he replaced the pistol in the drawer of the desk where he had seen it the day before. There were several things that Anne and the public would never know. Leaving the door of the secret chamber slightly ajar he pushed the bookcase against it so that it was hidden altogether.

As he reached for the telephone to call the authorities, he saw an envelope lying on the desk addressed in Norman's big, bold handwriting. It bore Wayland's name. He tore it open hastily and read:

"Wayland, I am going to end it all. I must go with Camille. Our spirits will walk together in the great Unknown, but you may bury our bones together. Tell Anne anything you wish. She never loved me. It was always you, but I made her believe that you had wanted Camille. Take her, old man, she deserves all the happiness you can make for her. *"Dick."*

So after all Dick had meant to take his own life, but the grim spectre Death had stalked in and reaped the harvest in his own way. Wayland glanced toward the hidden door and shuddered involuntarily. He would keep Anne in her room until every detail of that den of horrors was a thing of the past.

He took up the telephone and calmly called the coroner's number.

PRISONERS OF THE DEAD

(Continued from page 56)

fin and carrying it into the library for that one night, then taking it out again before morning. That must have been their last card. I wonder how they knew John would come out of his room before morning?"

Again her husband spoke:

"I've thought of that. Probably they intended to raise an alarm of some kind that would bring me out—some devilish noise, perhaps. Or maybe Mrs. Murdock would have screamed, then pretended she saw nothing—just as Jarvins pretended, when he and I were looking together at the figure. But I heard their footsteps and came out. They must have been standing near me in the darkness at the time. Instead of going crazy on the spot, I fainted."

The doctor, prominent among the guests, nodded gravely.

"Some temperaments go mad when they reach the breaking-point; others faint."

"I'm glad you're the fainting kind, John," Mary smiled into his face, still pale and nervous. "It would have been awfully inconvenient to have you go crazy, just before our wedding day."

"But for you, I might have gone crazy," he assured her; but she laughingly negatived the suggestion.

"I didn't get into it till the excitement was nearly over. Their scheme had failed by that time. In spite of everything, you were still sane. You bore the brunt of it, yourself."

"Still, I don't see how you ever had the courage to go right up to the—the thing," one of the girls objected, admiringly.

Mary Bamber's quiet laugh overflowed into a reminiscent ripple.

"I never should have had it if the converter had not flared up," she admitted, candidly. "I knew then that the 'thing' wasn't a ghost. Ghosts don't throw shadows—at least, I have always heard that they don't. Wax figures do!"

THE SPIDER

(Continued from page 40)

Below the clock struck the hour of twelve.

There was a loud, painful buzzing in my head.

Then the spell seemed to fall from me, and as the great fangs of the thing groped for my throat I gave a loud cry and hurled myself with the blind madness of despair at the foul, hairy shape, falling to the carpeted floor locked in that relentless embrace.

I have but a hazy recollection of what occurred next—it seemed that I was mad. I struggled and kicked frantically in my futile efforts to avoid those fearsome fangs that were gripping my bared throat. Perhaps I screamed. . . .

I faintly remember my outstretched hand touching something that was cold—solid, and a sharp, thrilling sense of exultation passed through me as I rained wild blows, sickening, crunching blows, on the hideous, grinning head. . . . A loathsome, putrid mass oozed out. . . . the hairy legs slackened and grew rigid. . . . My madness spent, I rolled over on the floor. . . .

My stomach revolted. I was nauseated, sickened. . . . I swooned. . . .

They found me lying apparently lifeless on the floor, and firmly grasped in my hand a heavy iron poker.

Close by, its diamond eyes crushed to powder and battered almost beyond recognition lay the Golden Spider!

$600,000 FOR STUDY OF SPIRITUALISM

A BEQUEST of $400,000 has been made to Stanford university, San Francisco, for the study of spiritualism, according to a recent announcement. This gives the spiritualism and psychology departments a fund of more than $600,000, all derived from the estate of the late Thomas Welton Stanford of Melbourne, Australia, a brother of Senator Leland Stanford. The chair was originally founded by Thomas Welton, for many years a leading spiritualist. Trustees of the university accepted his first donation of $50,000 only on the understanding that investigations along "spirit" lines would be untrammeled, regardless of whether the case for or against spiritualism was shown to be true.

To date, Prof. John Edgar Coover, fellow in psychic phenomena, has been unable to find any scientific truth in the contentions of such eminent spiritualists as Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, that communication with the dead is possible.

THE EYRIE

IT HAS been said—truthfully, we think—that if any editor knew exactly what everybody wants to read he could speedily attain for his magazine a tremendous circulation. But no editor knows. It's largely guesswork—this matter of publishing what people want.

Ourself, we get a staggering amount of manuscripts of every conceivable sort; and we frankly confess that half the time we're uncertain which ones to refuse and which to accept. At this moment we are confronted by such a dilemma in the shape of a story that has us (in a manner of speaking) all up in the air.

This story presents an interesting problem. We don't know what to do with it. We don't know whether it's a masterpiece of weird literature, or a new interpretation of the Einstein Theory, or a puzzle picture, or what it is. And so we're going to submit it to our readers. We're going to print the letter that accompanied the manuscript; and we ask you to read this letter, and then (remembering that the manuscript is written in the same matchless style) tell us whether or not you want us to print the story. Here's the letter:

"Mr. Edwin Baird, Editor, of the Wierd Tales.

Dear Sir Your Name hase been sent to me that you are in the market for short Stories. and I am going to send you one of my manuscripts. of one of my short stories. The Name of the Storie is—The Transparent Ghost, After you have looked and read my Manuscript. of this short storie and if you think you want it for your magazine, plese let me know at once and if you think you cant youse it you will find Postage. Stamps to return it back to me and if you have a plase in you magazine for it let me know soon as posaballe I have a few more short stories one Detective storie and if you like this one I would like to send to you my manuscript of the Detective Storie

Hoping to here from you soon and al so that you can youse thas Storie of the Transparent Ghost in your magazine,
and also that I my Have the pleasure of writing sevril more Stories for you

Resp. yours
Please Adress all my letters to the adress below.
Mrs, D. M. Manzer.
Amarillo. Texas,
Gen. Del.
But as the Author to all my Stories is to be as my name is asined below
Author of the
Transparent Ghost, Mrs. Isa-belle Manzer."

So there you are! If you like the letter you'll surely like the story. We promise you that. And if you want the story you shall have it.

Another remarkable feature of this extraordinary yarn is that you may start reading it at any point and lose none of its charm. You can read it forward, or backward, or either way from the middle—and you'll never know you're off the track. A most unusual tale!

We discovered this, inadvertently, when we first opened the manuscript and began on the first sentence of the top page and read steadily through to the last sentence of the bottom page, and then, chancing to notice the number thereon, we found, to our amazement, that we'd read the thing backward! The pages had been transposed, so that the last page was first and the first page last, and we'd read the whole blooming thing upside down without ever knowing the difference. That's the sort of story it is.

What say? Would you care to see this treasure? If so, speak up, and we'll start it serially in our next issue.

THAT matter disposed of, we'll look through our correspondence and see what our readers are saying about us. We always enjoy letters like this from Homer O. Peterson of Delaware, Ohio—short and snappy and to the point:

"Now about the September number: Every story was good, most of them excellent, with the exception of one, 'The Autobiography of a Blue Ghost.' Evidently Mr. Lemon, whoever he is, tried to write a humorous story. Well, in my opinion he made a miserable failure. This story is the most ridiculous thing, the most ludicrous one, I ever read. It did not start out so badly, but the latter part—! Do you think our ghosts, anyone's, could do as many silly things as was cited in this story? But we can easily excuse this little mistake this time, and maybe later Mr. Lemon will write a really sensible ghost story. If there was one poor story in your magazine there were a dozen good ones to make up for it. I can hardly wait for the conclusion of the 'People of the Comet' by Austin Hall. 'The Case of Dr. Johnstone' by Burton Peter Thom is one of the best scientific stories you have published. It is convincing, appealing, and has all the elements that go to make up a good short story. 'The Old Burying Ground' by Edgar Lloyd Hampton was another excellent story. The realism made the appearance of the night riders all the more striking and haunting. This story is in my opinion the best novelette you have published. I am anxiously awaiting the next number of WEIRD TALES."

Cecil John Eustace of the Bank of Montreal, St. Catharines, Ontario, has a happy way of summing up his likes and dislikes—thus:

"Dear Editor: I have just finished reading the August copy of WEIRD TALES, and I want to tell you how much your effort in producing such a magazine as this is appreciated. It is just the thing that a large section of the reading public has always wanted, a good collection of unusual and weird stories. It is the first copy that I have seen in Canada, and I hope we get plenty more. I agree with W. T. F. about the covers, as I think that many more people would buy WEIRD TALES if they were not scared off it by the cover.

In the August number I thought the following were good: 'The Two Men Who Murdered Each Other,' 'The Strange Case of Jacob Arum,' 'Riders in the Dark,' 'Outcasts.'

The following fair: 'The Guard of Honor,' 'Black Cunjer,' 'Shades.'

And the following bad: 'The Room in the Tower,' 'Senorita Serpente,' 'Mandrake.'

As you wisely remark, however, it is a good thing that everybody is not pleased by the same thing."

WE'VE received, and are still receiving, a considerable number of flattering letters about Austin Hall's bizarre serial, "The People of the Comet," which came to an end in the October number, and in view of this we feel persuaded to quote an excerpt from a letter which the author writes to us:

"My dear Mr. Baird: I hope that both your magazines will be going like whirlwinds before long. Let me commend you for the form of the magazines that you now have on the market, and let me give you a few pointers. When your DETECTIVE TALES came out I picked it up because I had to—because of its shape, size, neatness and general get-up. It spoke 'class' from the start. Then, when your WEIRD TALES came out—old style—I was interested; I had always wanted to see a magazine that catered to the imagination. I had hopes; but at first I was afraid. One newsstand that I was watching had fourteen copies and sold just one—and that one I bought myself. The same with the next issue. But when you came out with the large size—what a difference! I stepped into the newstand the other day, and out of fourteen they had one left."

After that (by way of thanking Mr. Hall), we can do no less than show him one of the many letters concerning his novel:

"My dear sir: Your September issue of WEIRD TALES more than upholds the standard set by your former numbers. The kaleidoscopic imagination of Austin Hall which produced that fantastic piece of fiction, 'The People of the Comet,' sets a pace which others may well emulate. Stories such as this intrigue the imagination, and in touching upon the wonderful possibilities of science they appeal to a great number of readers. They may be weird and fantastic without being downright revolting in their filth, as are many stories in which authors attempt the unusual. WEIRD TALES is 'Unique' and has its own place in the magazine field. Continue the present policy and style.—Charles G. Kidney, 1437 W. 126th St., Cleveland, Ohio."

Here is one that quite makes us blush—and fills us with gratitude:

"Mr. Edwin Baird: Just a word about WEIRD TALES. Some day the fiction center of the United States is going to shift from New York to Chicago; and then WEIRD TALES will be found leading the van if it keeps up with the WEIRD TALES of today. I find the——and other fiction magazines of the old style, as one would find a steady diet of oysters, palling. Fancy the same dish for twenty years! I scatter the copies of WEIRD TALES I buy in an endeavor to make more readers.—Sidney E. Johnson, Motor Route B, Box 395, Joplin, Mo."

FROM Mrs. Elizabeth Purington of 1018 W. Walnut St., Santa Ana, California, comes an interesting letter in which she asks our opinion of a dream she had. We're not so good at interpreting feminine dreams, so we pass her letter on to you, with the hope that somebody may be able to help the lady:

"Dear Editor: Bought the September issue of WEIRD TALES last night and have just finished it. Sort of a relief, and yet I wish there were more. . . . I had rather a queer experience one night. Was it a dream, or, if not, what really happened? I 'dreamed' I died. I often faint while asleep, but this was different. I seemed to be conscious, but I can't be sure of that. Everything was dark, and I seemed to be walking along a rough road. All around me were dead bodies. I kept falling over them. Finally I saw a small light 'way ahead. When I reached it I was at the edge of a high cliff. Thinking I was going to fall, I glanced up and above me were a dozen or more illuminated hands. As I grasped a pair of these I turned cold, and then truly opened my eyes. I found myself stretched full length in bed, fully covered, but icy cold, and could not move a muscle. I must have lain this way for an hour or more before I felt warmth coming back to me. Then, and not before, I was able to move. . . . Do you think it was only a dream, or was it more than that? I'm all puzzled."

There's such a huge stack of letters here on our desk that, to use the utmost number of them, we'll have to step aside and print 'em without editorial comment. After all, an editor, like a stage director, should stay in the wings, not in front of the curtain.

"Dear Mr. Baird: I have been reading all issues of WEIRD TALES, and I think the magazine is going, or should go, good. Four out of five yarns are A-1. Guess you saw the complimentary notice given it in the 'Thinks and Things' department of the Writers' Monthly several months ago. The newsstands here don't give your magazine much prominence; can't you get some advance placards regarding the current numbers? They help immensely. . . . As for DETECTIVE TALES, I don't think favorably of it. It's hard to get away from the regular formula detective stories; your Henry Leverage stories are the only ones that impress me. The make up and the illustrations of the two magazines are good, in my estima-

WATCH KNIFE AND CHAIN ALL 3 ONLY
2.90
Thin Model, 16 size, Accurate Time Keeper, beautiful engraved, solid silveroid case. This is a great bargain. Do not confuse this watch which others offered at lower prices. This watch is Fully Tested, Inspected, and Guaranteed, stem wind and set. Send No Money. Pay postman only $2.90 and the Watch, Knife and Chain is yours. Consolidated Novelty Co., Dept. 233, 20 E. Lake St., Chicago

SEND NO MONEY

THE WILD CAT
Regular Swing-Out, Hand-ejecting, Left-Hand Wheeler Revolver
32.20 or 38 Cal. 6 Shot
$14.25

A powerful six shot gun; made specially for Ranger mountaineers and men working in unprotected places, requiring a safe and efficient weapon. Quick as a flash, with great penetrating power and true marksmanship. Carry this gun with you, and you will feel fully protected. Made of best blue steel, rifled barrel. Hammer with safety. Fires regular, short and long 32.20 or .38 caliber ammunition. $14.25.

20 Shot Automatic Pistol

$8.50
20 Shot—32 Cal.

The biggest bargain ever offered. Built of best blue steel, checkered grip, safety. Every one brand new and inspected. Shoots all standard .32 cal. cartridges. 10 shot with extra magazine, making 20 quick, hard straight shots. Buy several while they last, at our unheard price, $8.50 (regular $35). Pocket Size, .25 cal. 7 shot. $7.80. Send No Money. Pay on arrival, our bargain price, plus few cents postage. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. Order today, NOW.

THE PRICE CUTTING CO.
Dept. 675, 55 Broadway, New York

FREE FINGER PRINT OUTFIT

To those who enroll right now I will give this complete Finger Print Outfit absolutely free. It is a regular expert's working outfit—the same kind that I use myself—the same kind that you will use when you are ready to accept a position as a Finger Print Expert. This offer is for a limited time only, so you must hurry if you want to take advantage of it. Send in the coupon today for full information.

BE A FINGER PRINT EXPERT

Learn at Home—30 Minutes a Day

Only thirty minutes a day for a short time. That is all that is necessary. I am a Finger Print Expert and I know just what is required. I give you just the kind of training that prepares you to be a Finger Print Expert—that assures you of a position just as soon as you have finished my course. The Finger Print Expert is always in demand. You need not give up your present occupation while studying this fascinating profession. Get into this big paying profession right now.

More Men Needed Right Now

The professional Finger Print Expert is always in demand. I have so many positions waiting to be filled right now that I am guaranteeing to place every man as soon as he finishes my course and I am backing up this remarkable offer with a $1000 bank guarantee deposited with the Phillips State Bank of Chicago. Let me make you a Finger Print Expert and start you in a big paying position.

I Guarantee You a Position

as soon as you have finished this course. Write today for full information.

Send Coupon Today

The big opportunity you have been waiting for is here. Remember you have a position waiting for you as soon as you have finished this course. Also to every student that I accept now I will give absolutely free a complete Finger Print Outfit as illustrated above.

Besides, a valuable course for Secret Service Intelligence is also given free to all my students. This information itself is worth many times the cost of the complete course. Send coupon today and learn all about it.

U. S. School of Finger Prints
7003 No. Clark St. Room 13-98 Chicago, Ill.

U. S. School of Finger Prints, Room 13-98
7003 No. Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

Without any obligations whatsoever please send me full information about your "Guaranteed Position Offer—Free Finger Print Outfit." Also tell me how I can become a Finger Print Expert.

Name_____ Age_____

Address _____

City_____ State_____

SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE

320 PAGES, ILLUSTRATED, CLOTH
By Winfield Scott Hall, M. D., Ph. D.

SEX FACTS MADE PLAIN

What every young man and Every young woman should know:
What every young husband and Every young wife should know;
What every parent should know.

Table contents and commendations on request

$1.00 POSTPAID
Mailed in plain wrapper.

AMERICAN PUB. CO., 1177 Winston Bldg., Philadelphia

PUT THIS WONDERFUL RING NEXT TO A GENUINE DIAMOND AND IF YOU CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE SEND IT BACK

"Rabon" diamonds positively match genuine diamonds. The same glitter, blaze, and flash and dazzling rays of fire and fire almost defying life time diamond expert. Neither science nor man has ever created anything more realistic. Give Rabon the same test that you would a genuine diamond, prove to yourself its amazing qualities.

WEAR A "RABON" DIAMOND TEN DAYS, AT OUR EXPENSE. YOU TAKE NO RISK. And if your friends, or even you yourself, can tell it from a genuine diamond, send it back and we guarantee to refund your money immediately.

No. 1 Ladies' hand carved white platinum effect . . . $3.85
No. 2 Hand carved Octagon gypsy green gold finish . . $4.25
No. 7 Finely carved platinum effect or 14 karat finish . $3.74
No. 9 Handsome tooth ring mounted in 14 karat gold shell $3.27
No. 10 Massive hand carved platinum effect $5.75
No. 12. 2 karat size. Others 1 karat all white absolutely perfect. Mountings exact duplicates of latest style, original, genuine creations. Unconditionally guaranteed for 20 years.

SEND NO MONEY. Send size shown by slip of paper fitting end to end around your finger joint. When ring arrives by return mail, deposit with the postman amount shown above and if you are not more than delighted or decide not to keep it within 10 days, send it back and get your money.

THE RABON CO. 942 Bway, Dept. 103 New York

tion. If this letter is a 'knocker,' don't mind it. My opinion isn't worth much. But I do want to see WEIRD TALES, in especial, go big. Wishing you all sorts of good luck—Joseph Faus, 408 First National Bank Building, Miami, Fla."

"My dear Mr. Baird: Have read all the issues to date of your unique magazine. Some of them were good, some excellent, and some were—well, just tales. However, you have gained a reader just the same, who is fed up on the wishy-washy tales in the average magazine. You deserve the acme of success for your courage in taking the radical step that you have, and all best wishes for that success.—Ralph S. Happel, 93 State St., Albany, N. Y."

"Dear sirs: I want to congratulate you on the wonderful book your company is putting out. In this month's issue 'The Cup of Blood' was a corker. It was one of the most interesting stories in the book.—Thomas J. Harris, 83 Kingston Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y."

"Dear Mr. Baird: Allow me to express, again, my appreciation for the kind of story WEIRD TALES stands for. As soon as I get definitely located, I intend to show my appreciation in a more substantial way by subscribing for this magazine. I have all the numbers except the first, and am thus proving my right to be a WEIRD TALES fan.—Walter F. McCanless, Wadesboro, N. C."

"My dear Editor: The readers in The Eyrie are all enthusiasts, no doubt, but they can't beat me in voicing my praise of your new book. . . . Poe is the best of this kind I have yet read, but weird stories are hard to get, and, being especially interested in ancient Egypt, I enjoyed 'The Hall of the Dead' the most. What do you suppose E. E. L. of Chicago considers Poe's 'supreme tale'? . . The present-day conventions in movies, stories and drama are downright hokum. Why? They never consider the occult at all. They must have a happy ending. The editor says so. Don't you think people are about fed up on the same old stories day by day? Why did O. Henry make such a hit? Not from a weird standpoint, of course, but his stories travel along life's path as only life itself would and can!—Godfrey Lampert, Jasper, Ind."

"Mr. Edwin Baird: I started reading your youthful magazine at its first appearance, and, like everybody else, I enjoy the stories, but I have a bit of criticism to make. . . . . I am very fond of weird stories, tales of terror and mystery, but it would never do for anyone to read this type of story only and continuously. What we read has a vital part in moulding our thoughts and life, and too much of this morbid stuff would drive a person insane. . . The most terrifying of stories are those which suggest the horrors of insanity, of the premature pronouncing of death and premature burial and the dead-seeming form of catalepsy. With the thought of these brought out in a story, the afterthought would be, 'What if it should happen to me!' So I suggest that in closing the magazine each month you have some story practical and wholesome in nature, so that we readers can read it last and sleep without dreams that are frightful. If not a story of that kind, then print a page of jokes (but I fear they would be read first, not last). For proof that WEIRD TALES is strong stuff, my mother (who is usually bored by the usual kind of stories and goes to sleep reading them) is able to stay awake long enough to read W. T. —Lee Andrews, 220 Minerva St., Indianapolis, Ind."

"Dear Sir: As I have been a constant reader of your magazine for some

Free for 10 Days' Wear

Send no money—just your name and address. We will then send you one of these genuine Tifnite gems to wear for 10 days. Note its dazzling brilliancy. Put it alongside the costliest diamond. If you can tell the Tifnite from a real diamond, send it back.

Like a REAL Diamond

A genuine Tifnite has all the fire and flash of a real diamond. And like a real diamond, every Tifnite is set in a beautiful solid gold mounting.

Gents' Ring No. 1
Genuine Tifnite gem. Almost 1 karat in weight. Solid gold mounting. Wide flat bezel. 8-prong setting to hold stone securely.

Ladies' Ring No. 2
Newest style mounting. Solid gold and hand-made, guaranteed Genuine Tifnite gem, almost 1 karat weight, in exquisitely rich setting.

Order Quick We have only 5,000 of these rings to quickly introduce ourselves to new customers. Prices specially low, terms very easy. Everything on pay-as-you-wear basis. Send strip of paper fitting around second joint of finger for your ring size. We will send you your choice of these Tifnite rings. When it arrives, deposit $2.50 with postmaster. Wear it 10 days at our expense. If anyone can tell it from diamond, send it back and we will refund your deposit. If you decide to buy, merely pay the balance at $3.00 per month until the special price of $12.50 is paid. Write today.

THE TIFNITE COMPANY
1467-69 S. Michigan Ave. Dept. 11334 Chicago

Good Luck and Happiness

I will tell you FREE Under which Zodiac Sign were you born? What are your opportunities in life, your future prospects, happiness in marriage, friends, enemies, success in all undertakings and many other vital questions as indicated by ASTROLOGY, the most ancient and interesting science of history?

Were you born under a lucky star? I will tell you free, the most interesting astrological interpretation of the Zodiac Sign you were born under.

Simply send me the exact date of your birth in your own handwriting. To cover cost of this notice and postage, enclose *twelve cents* in any form and your exact name and address. Your astrological interpretation will be written in plain language and sent to you securely sealed and postpaid. A great surprise awaits you! Write now—TODAY—to the

ASTA STUDIO, Dept. W. T., 309 Fifth Ave., New York

This is Pattern 534
3 RUGS FREE
Choice of Two Patterns
GOLD SEAL CONGOLEUM GUARANTEE
One Big 9x12 ft. Rug and 3 Small Rugs to Match.
This is Pattern 408

Four CONGOLEUM GOLD SEAL Rugs Less than Price of One

The Gold Seal that comes pasted on each and every rug is the guarantee of the Congoleum Company of complete satisfaction or money back. That's what the Gold Seal on a Congoleum rug stands for. Behind the Gold Seal guarantee of the manufacturer is our own Double Guarantee Bond.

Choice of Two Famous Patterns

3 Rugs Free — Special Bargain Price — Year to Pay

We show two of the most popular Congoleum patterns that have ever been produced. One dollar pinned to the coupon below brings you either pattern on approval. One 9 foot by 12 foot rug and three small rugs to to match, each small rug 18 x 36 inches.

Oriental Pattern No. 534

This is the beautiful Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rug as shown at the top of this page. On the floor, it looks unbelievably like an expensive woven rug. The richest blue color dominates the ground work. Mellow ecru, old ivories, and light tans, set off the blue field. Mingled with these lovely tints are peacock blue, robin's egg blue and darker tones. Old rose, tiny specks of lighter pink and dark mulberry are artistically placed. Darker browns and blacks lend dignity and richness.

The border background contrasts with the blue all over center by reversing the color scheme. Ecru and tan shades form the border background.

An ideal all purpose rug, beautiful in any room. Perfect for living room or parlor. Lovely in bedroom or dining room. Charming in the kitchen.

Only $1.00 with Coupon — $1.50 Monthly

No. E4C534 9 x 12 ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Rug with 3 small rugs to match, each 18x36 in.—all four only **$17.95**

Tile Pattern No. 408

Probably no floor covering of any quality or price ever piled up the popularity of this wonderful design. It is a superb tile pattern that looks like mosaic. Lovely robin's egg blue, with shadings of Dutch blue, and a background of soft stone gray, give a matchless effect. This design is particularly suited for the kitchen or dining room.

Only $1.00 with Coupon — $1.50 Monthly

No. E4C408 9 x 12 ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Rug with 3 small rugs to match, each 18x36 in.—all four only **$17.95**

Very Important NO LARGE CITIES

Our easy credit terms, our wonderful free trial offer, are designed and arranged to serve home lovers in the smaller towns and communities throughout the country. If you live in a city of 100,000 population or over, we cannot fill your order for this Congoleum Rug Offer or send our free catalog.

10000 Other Furniture Bargains

Spiegel, May, Stern Co

1777 West 35th Street, Chicago, Ill.

Ask for Free Catalog

$1.00

Brings All Four Rugs on a Month's FREE TRIAL!

Ours is the only house in America that can make you such an offer. No one else can bring you a genuine guaranteed Gold Seal Congoleum Rug, in the full 9 x 12 ft. size, with three small rugs extra, and all for **less** than the **regular price of the big rug alone. And on a year credit.**

Clip the coupon below. Write your name and address plainly. Say which pattern you want. Pin a dollar bill to it—mail at once. We will ship immediately—on a month's trial—**all 4 Congoleum Rugs**—in one complete neat package. No muss, no bother, no trouble to lay **If satisfactory, take a year to pay.**

The Greatest of Bargains Pay Almost as You Please

Almost everybody knows the price of the famous Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs. They are advertised and sold at the same standard price everywhere. Look everywhere else first if you wish — stores, catalogs, magazines and newspapers. You'll find no offer like ours.

If you return the rugs, your dollar will be refunded and also all freight costs.

Three Rugs FREE For heavy wear spots in front of range, sink, kitchen. At thresholds, in hall, in front of dresser or bed. While this offer lasts, we give three of these small rugs free with each large rug; **all four for less than the regular price of one.**

The Rug of Guaranteed Wear

Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs are the most popular floor covering known. They are rapidly becoming the national floor covering — highly prized in good homes for any and all rooms.

Waterproof. No burlap for water to rot. Surface is hard, smooth and wear-resisting. Does not stain. Not marred or hurt by spilling of hot liquids.

They lie flat from the first moment without fastening. They never curl up or kick up at edges or corners. No need to tack or fasten them down. Dirt cannot accumulate underneath.

Less work. Rid yourself of back-breaking drudgery. Dirt, ashes, grit, dust or mud cannot "grind into" Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs. A damp rag or mop keeps it clean and colorings bright.

No laborious beating, no sending to cleaners. Absolutely sanitary. All this guaranteed by the famous Gold Seal that means complete satisfaction or your money back.

Ask for Free Catalog!

It shows 10,000 other bargains—it brings credit without asking. Everything from cellar to garret.

Beds — Bedding — Carpets — Rugs — Dishes — Cooking Utensils — Curtains — Furniture — Silverware — Lamps. Also diamonds, watches, jewelry.

YOUR REQUEST ON A POSTAL IS ENOUGH.

Pin a Dollar to Coupon Below

Spiegel, May, Stern Co., 1777 W. 35th St., Chicago, Ill.

I enclose $1 for the 4 Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rugs—exactly as described—in the pattern selected below, on 30 days free trial. If I return them, you are to refund my $1, also all transportation costs. Otherwise I will pay $1.00 monthly, until special bargain price of $17.95, is paid.

I want Pattern Number

Be sure to write in space above the **Number** of the pattern you select. If you wish both patterns, put down both numbers and **$2** with order and **$2** monthly **and get all 8 rugs.**

Name _____

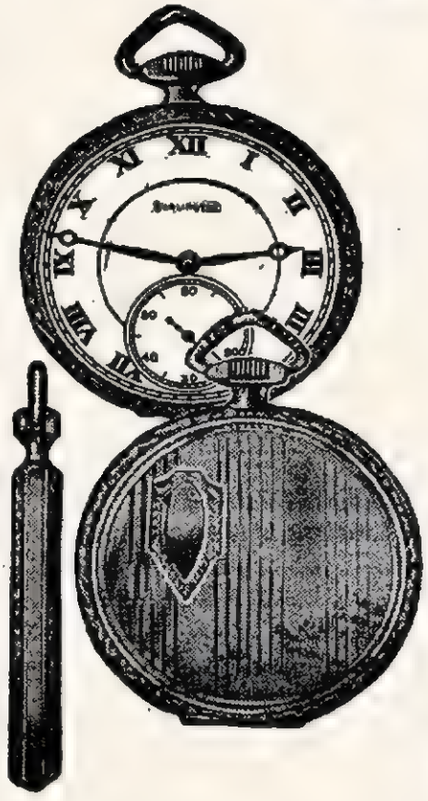
Street, R. F. D. or Box No. _____

Shipping Point _____

City _____ *State* _____

Also send me your latest Free Furniture Book

21 Jewel Burlington



Adjusted to the Second
Adjusted to Temperature
Adjusted to Isochronism
Adjusted to Positions

21 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels
25 Year Gold Strata Case
Your choice of Dials
(Including Montgomery R.R. Dial)
New Ideas in Thin Cases

Only $1.00 Down

Only One Dollar Down will buy this masterpiece of watch manufacture. The balance you are allowed to pay in small, easy, monthly payments. The Burlington—a 21-Jewel Watch—is sold to you at a price much lower than that of other high-grade watches. Besides, you have the selection of the finest thin model designs and latest styles in watch cases. Don't delay! Write for the FREE Watch Book and our SPECIAL OFFER today.

Just Out!
Latest designs in Watch Cases beautifully illustrated in our booklet. Send for FREE Copy.

Write While This Special Offer Lasts

Get the Burlington Watch Book by sending this coupon. Find out about this great special offer which is being made for only a limited time. You will know a great deal more about watch buying when you read this book. You will be able to "steer clear" of the over-priced watches which are no better. Remember, the Burlington is sent to you for only One Dollar down, balance in small monthly payments. Send the coupon for watch book and our special offer TODAY.

BURLINGTON WATCH COMPANY
Dept. 13-97, 19th Street and Marshall Blvd., Chicago
Canadian Address: 62 Albert St., Winnipeg, Manitoba

Burlington Watch Company
Dept. 13-97, 19th St. and Marshall Blvd., Chicago
Canadian Address: 62 Albert St., Winnipeg, Manitoba

Please send me (without obligations and prepaid) your free book on watches with full explanation of your $1.00 down offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name _____

Address _____

time I feel that I must write and let you know how much I like it. By passing the copies among my friends, I have gained quite a number of readers for your magazine that heretofore did not know it existed. Have just finished reading your September issue, and think it great. I got a real thrill reading 'The Gorilla' by Horatio Vernon Ellis. It was a dandy. Would like to see him appear again in WEIRD TALES. . . . In my opinion, 'The Autobiography of a Blue Ghost' was, instead of being horrible, silly. But it is a wonderful magazine, and I wish it continued prosperity and a wider circulation.—Mrs. F. Wickman, 311 Second Ave., W., Duluth, Minn."

"Dear Mr. Baird: Destiny, I suppose, compelled me to drop in and visit my uncle, who works in a cigar and magazine booth in a hotel here in town. Idly glancing over the magazines in the rack, I saw one with a black front and the words, WEIRD TALES, printed on it in red and white.. Not caring much for magazines, I had never noticed this one before. Picking it up, when my uncle's back was turned, the title, 'The People of the Comet,' immediately took my fancy, and, glancing at the titles of all the stories, I very soon made up my mind that I must have this magazine. I took 25 cents from a very nearly empty bank, went to the nearest magazine store and, after buying the magazine, ran all the way home, because I was afraid I might stop to read it on the street. Although I am only thirteen years old, I am crazy over WEIRD TALES. It is the very best magazine I have ever read. Some of the stories I don't like, but I have never yet been disappointed in the Unique Magazine. Here are some of the stories I like best: 'The Room with the Black Velvet Drapes,' 'Doctor X,' 'Shades,' 'The Room in the Tower,' 'The Corpse on the Third Slab,' 'The People of the Comet,' 'The Blood-Stained Parasol,' 'The Autobiography of a Blue Ghost.'—Ralph Fingle, 235 Fifth St., Long Beach, Calif.

"To the Editor of WEIRD TALES: Say, your magazine is GREAT. I have passed mine around among my friends, and they are all unanimous in the declaration that the fantastic tales in it are extremely interesting and unusual. The public DOES like creepy tales. We all like the unusual and we all enjoy letting our imagination take a wild flight occasionally. Your stories are a lot better than these risque stories the average

Learn Public Speaking

10 Lessons FREE

Write—quick—for particulars of this extraordinary offer; an opportunity you will never forget if you take advantage of it. Ten lessons in effective public speaking absolutely FREE to those who act promptly, to introduce our course in localities where it is not already known.

WHAT THE COURSE TEACHES YOU

How to talk before your club or lodge.
How to address board meetings.
How to propose and respond to toasts.
How to make a political speech.
How to tell entertaining stories.
How to make after-dinner speeches.
How to converse interestingly.
How to write better letters.
How to sell more goods.
How to train your memory.
How to enlarge your vocabulary.
How to develop self-confidence.
How to acquire a winning personality.
How to strengthen your will power and ambition.
How to become a clear, accurate thinker.
How to develop your power of concentration.
How to be the master of any situation.

We Teach You by Mail

We teach you by mail to become a powerful and convincing speaker—to influence and dominate the decisions of one man or an audience of a thousand. We have trained hundreds and helped them to increase their earnings and their popularity. Learn in your spare time at home how to overcome "stage fright" and conquer fear of others; how to enlarge your vocabulary; how to develop self-confidence and the qualities of leadership; how to RULE others by the power of your speech alone; how to train your memory.

New Easy Method

perfected and taught only by Prof. R. E. Pattison Kline, former dean of the Public Speaking Department of the Columbia College of Expression, can be learned in 15 minutes a day. Prof. Kline is one of the foremost authorities in the country on public speaking and mental development. Do not let this chance escape you.

Mail this Free Coupon

Offer Limited! Send No Money

This Special Offer of TEN LESSONS FREE is made strictly for advertising purposes, and will be withdrawn without notice. Write now before it expires, and receive full particulars with enrollment blank by return mail. No obligations of any kind. Just tear off and mail this free coupon—or a postal will do.

NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
3601 Michigan Ave., Dept. 6367, Chicago, Ill.

FREE LESSONS COUPON

North American Institute
3601 Michigan Ave., Dept. 6367
Chicago, Ill.

I am interested in your course in Effective Public Speaking and your offer of 10 lessons free. Please send full particulars. This request places me under no obligations of any kind.

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____

NEW TIRE
GUARANTEE!
ACT NOW
30X3½ CORD 2.00
WRITTEN GOLD BOND GUARANTEE WITH EACH TIRE
Greatest tire sale in America now on! Goodyear, Goodrich, Firestone, Fisk and other fine makes of tires going at record-breaking prices. These almost new tires will easily give thousands of miles of satisfactory service.
GUARANTEED 9 MONTHS
NEW TIRES NEW TUBES
30x3 $1.90 $ .90
30x3½ 2.00 .90
32x3½ 2.50 .90
31x4 2.75 .90
32x4 3.00 1.40
33x4 3.25 1.40
34x4 3.50 1.40
32x4½ $3.75 $1.65
33x4½ 3.75 1.65
34x4½ 4.00 1.65
35x4½ 4.25 1.65
36x4½ 4.25 1.65
35x5 4.25 1.95
37x5 4.25 1.95
Just send $1.00 deposit for each tire ordered. Balance C. O. D. subject to inspection. Our written gold bond guarantee with each tire positively assures you nine months satisfactory service or another tire will be given at half price. 6 per cent reduction for cash in full with order. Shipment made same day order is received. Order today—NOW.
INTERNATIONAL TIRE CORP.
240 EAST 14th STREET CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

What is your Zodiac Sign? What does it mean to your future?—happiness in marriage?—friends, enemies, success in all undertakings?—and other important questions?

FREE We tell you FREE.

Your future is governed by Astrology, the science that has foretold events with almost unfailing accuracy since 1200 years before Christ. The dependability of its truths has been investigated.

Let us give your Astrological interpretation. To cover packing, enclose TEN CENTS, (stamps or coin) your name, address, exact birthdate and receive yours by return mail. Learn the truth. A big surprise. Write today. DO NOT FORGET TO ENCLOSE YOUR BIRTHDATE.

ZODIAC RESEARCH SOCIETY
413-80 St. Suite 240 Brooklyn, N. Y.

Pimples

Your skin can be quickly cleared of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne Eruptions on the face or body, Barbers Itch, Eczema, Enlarged Pores, Oily or Shiny Skin.

FREE Write today for my FREE Booklet, "A Clear-Tone Skin," telling how I cured myself after being afflicted for 15 years. $1000 Cash says I can clear your skin of the above blemishes.

E. S. GIVENS, 137 Chemical Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

She Found a Pleasant Way To Reduce Her Fat

THOUSANDS OF overfat people have greatly reduced their weight and attained a normal figure by following the advice of many others who use and recommend *Marmola Prescription Tablets*. These harmless little fat reducers are prepared in tablet form from the same ingredients that formerly composed the famous Marmola Prescription *for fat reduction*.

If you are too fat, you owe it to yourself to give these fat reducers a fair trial. All the better drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar per package. Ask your druggist for them or send one dollar to the Marmola Co., 843 Garfield Bldg., Detroit, Mich. and secure a package of these tablets. They are harmless and reduce your weight without going through long sieges of tiresome exercise, starvation diet, or the application of absurd greases and salves. If you are too fat *try this today.*

editor is so pleased to accept and publish. I'm for stories like yours; unreal, some of them, but that is why they are good. For a while one can forget the dull grind of life. When you pick up WEIRD TALES you can't lay it down until you have read it all. That is something you can't say for most magazines. Of your stories, 'The Dead Man's Tale' is the best and most unusual. I don't believe that idea was ever put in a story before. Every one who read my magazine voted it the best. They all thought 'The Basket' and 'The Return of Black Jean' were rotten, and wondered why you took up space publishing them, but of course every one knows that editors have queer tastes sometimes, as well as the rest of us. I have never written anything but poety, but after reading your magazine, I thought I couldn't possibly do worse than 'The Basket,' so I'm enclosing a story.—Mrs. Thomas Earl Davison, 6520 Woodlawn Ave., Chicago."

"Dear WEIRD TALES Editor: I am enthusiastic over the 'new' magazine. I always loved weird stories, but never could get in touch with a magazine that produced them. So here's hoping you live and thrive and keep on keeping on. —Edith Lyle Ragsdale, Centralia, Ill."

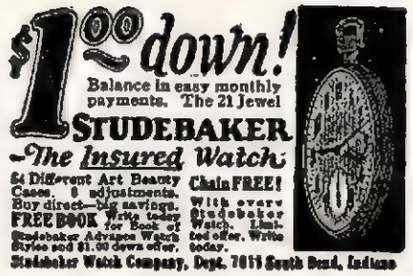
"Dear Mr. Baird: I got hold of WEIRD TALES in Portland the other day. It's a hummer! You certainly have a new idea, and it's a boon for authors since they can cut loose and let their imaginations revel. I shouldn't be at all surprised if it fathered another 'King Solomon's Mines.'—E. B., West Point, Me."

"Dear Editor: Please do publish one of those 'dark night, awful storm, awfuler haunted house' ones that we girls are so fond of. Great work, yours, but too much detective stuff for us.—Gertrude Strauss, R. 3, B. 186, Puyallup, Wash."

DIVING through the remainder of our stack of letters, we encounter several that request us to bind several issues of WEIRD TALES and publish it quarterly. It's a clever idea. We'll do it some day—if enough of our readers want it.

Meanwhile, don't forget to vote on "The Transparent Ghost." We're losing all our beauty sleep, thinking about that story.

THE EDITOR.


$1.00 down!
Balance in easy monthly payments. The 21 Jewel
STUDEBAKER
The Insured Watch
64 Different Art Beauty Cases. 6 adjustments. Buy direct—big savings. FREE BOOK Write today for Book of Studebaker Advance Watch Styles and $1.00 down offer.
Chain FREE! With every Studebaker Watch. Limited offer. Write today.
Studebaker Watch Company, Dept. 7011 South Bend, Indiana

SELL TIRES
Earn $75 to $300 Wkly.
This is your chance—others are making big money. The demand for our standard make used tires — including Goodrich, Goodyear, Fisk and Firestone — has grown immensely and we now need representatives to take care of our customers. Be our representative. "Go-Getters" make big money.
SPECIAL OFFER
To make things easy for you—just tell us what territory you want—and send a trial order for one to a dozen tires at these unheard of low prices. You can make handsome profits.
30x3 and 30x3½, $2
Any Other Size, $2.25
Send $1 with each tire ordered. Balance C. O. D. subject to inspection. 10% discount when ordered in lots of 6 or more. New Tubes 80x3 1-2, 90c. Any other size $1.40. Every tire ordered by you guaranteed nine months or another at half price. Make big money as national distributors' representatives. Order now
UNITED FINANCING SYNDICATE
Dept. 2023 1520 S. Wabash Chicago

GERMAN MAUSER

Reg. price $25.00.

$11.50 25 Cal.

32 cal. $12.50
WITH PERFECT SAFETY DEVICE

Guaranteed Genuine Latest model 8 shot automatic. Shoots Standard cartridges—lies flat in the pocket—World's famous Luger 30 Cal. $18.50. Hand Ejector Revolver, swing out cylinder 32 cal. $12.50, 38 cal. $16.50. All brand new latest models—guaranteed genuine imported.

SEND NO MONEY Pay postman on delivery plus postage. Satisfaction guaranteed or money promptly refunded.

$6.00 25 Cal. Vest Pocket Automatic—25 cal. Blue Steel Army Automatic $7.85. 32 Cal. $10.25. Military Trench Automatic—38 cal. 10 shot, extra magazine FREE. $12.50. Imported Ten Break Revolver, 32 Cal. $8.25, 38 Cal. $9.25.

UNITED SALES CO., 12 East 22nd St. Dept. 51 New York

What a delight to own this beautiful 1 Carat Elite Diamond perfect, brilliant; fiery and dazzling. Only experts can tell it from a $150.00 ring. Stunning high Tiffany set gold S guaranteed. BAR PIN FREE. Beautiful 2¼-inch Bar Pin set with 12 Elite Diamonds absolutely FREE with each ring order. SEND NO MONEY. Just send your name, address and finger size. When ring arrives pay postman $2.19 and postage. Satisfaction guaranteed. Write today. Cash with Canadian orders.

ELITE JEWELRY HOUSE
Dept. 406, 306 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

SEX EXPLAINED!

Sex truth at last. Dr. Cowan's book answers in plain understandable language all you want to know. "The SCIENCE OF A NEW LIFE" TELLS ABOUT: The Sex Appeal—Choosing a Mate—Blissful Marriage—HOW BABIES ARE CONCEIVED AND BORN—What to Avoid—Twilight Sleep—etc., 408 pages illustrated.

THIS BOOK IS NOT FOR CHILDREN. Special edition of this $3.00 book sent postpaid for $2.00. (C. O. D. 10c extra.)

OGILVIE PUB. CO.
57 Rose St., Dept. 90, New York City

SEXUAL — LOVE AND LIFE!

The Woman Who Wished She Could Play the Piano

And How She Found An Easy Way To Turn Her Wish Into a Fact

A YEAR or so ago this woman didn't know one note from another. Today she plays the piano—entirely by note—better than many who have been playing for years. Here she tells how she learned and why it was so easy. Thousands of others from school children to men and women of 50 to 60, have also learned music in the same easy way. A new method that makes singing or any instrument amazingly simple to master.

FROM the time I was a child I have always had a yearning and longing to play the piano.

Often I have felt that I would gladly give up half of my life if some kind fairy would only turn my wish into a fact. You see I had begun to think I was too old to learn, that only some sort of fairy story magic could give me the ability to play. I was 35 years old—and the mother of a small family—before I knew one note from another.

Until I learned to play, hearing music—especially the piano—always gave me almost as much pain as pleasure. My enjoyment of it was always somewhat soured by envy and regret—envy of those who could entertain and charm with their playing, regret because I myself had to be a mere listener. And I suppose it is that way with every one who has to be satisfied with hearing music instead of playing it.

Again and again, parties and other social gatherings have been all but spoiled for me. I could enjoy myself until some one suggested music or singing; then I felt "left out"—a lonesome wallflower—a mere looker-on instead of part of the party. I was missing half the fun.

It was often almost as bad when callers came. It is so much easier to entertain people—particularly if you don't know them well—if one can turn to the piano to fill the gaps when conversation lags. But until recently our piano was only a piece of furniture. We bought it three years ago, simply to have it in the house while waiting for our two little girls to reach the age for beginning lessons—for I was determined that they should never be denied the full enjoyment of music the way I had been. But as it turned out, I learned to play before my girls did—in fact, I myself am now their teacher.

The way I have suddenly blossomed out in music (almost over night, you might say) has been a big surprise to all who know me, and to myself as well. My friends seem to think it must be that I had a previously undiscovered genius for the piano. But if there was any genius about it, it wasn't on my part, but in the lessons I took—a new and simplified method that makes it remarkably easy for any one to add music or singing to their daily lives. Any one anywhere can now learn to play any instrument or learn to sing just as easily as I did. All the hard part, all the big expense, all the old difficulties, have been swept away by this simple new method.

I learned entirely by home study—in my spare time—from fascinating Print-and-Picture lessons that make everything so simple and easy that one simply can't go wrong on them. I call it a short-cut way to learn—it is so much simpler and so entirely different from the old and hard-to-understand methods. I know that I made better and faster progress than I ever could by bothering with a private teacher or joining a class. In fact, while I don't like to brag, within six months after I took my first lesson my playing was better than that of many of my friends who had studied two or three years under private teachers—not because I was any more apt than they, but simply because the wonderful Print-and-Picture lessons sent me by the U. S. School of Music were so easy to understand.

Then they were so interesting that study and practice were more like a pastime than a task or duty. And so convenient; you can study and practice just as it happens handy, instead of tying yourself down to set hours. And no strangers around to embarrass you or make you nervous.

Within a year after I took my first lesson I began teaching my two little girls to play—using exactly the same lessons I myself had studied. And I notice that both of them seem to be getting along better than any of their playmates who have private teachers. In addition, I am saving the money it would cost to have a private teacher—I figure it would cost at least $3 to $5 a lesson to have a teacher whose instruction could compare with that contained in the printed lesson from the U. S. School. Yet, from the first lesson to the last, the total cost of learning the way I did averaged only a few cents a day.

My only regret is that I didn't know of this really wonderful method years before. The ability to play is such a great comfort. No matter how much I am alone, I never get lonesome—I can always turn to my piano for amusement. I am never at a loss for a way to entertain callers. I no longer feel that I am "out of it" at social gatherings. Do you wonder that I so gladly recommend the method that has brought me so much pleasure and satisfaction?

This woman's experience is by no means unusual. Over 300,000 others—from school children to men and women of 50 and 60—have learned to play their favorite instrument or learned to sing in the same way this woman did. Read the enthusiastic letters which you will find printed here—samples of the kind of letters we are receiving practically every mail. Largely through the recommendation of satisfied pupils, we have built up the largest school of music in the world.

Whether for beginners or advanced pupils our method is a revolutionary improvement of the old and hard-to-learn methods used by private teachers, and our method is as thorough as it is simple and easy. We teach you in the only right way—teach you to play or sing entirely by note. No "trick" music, no "numbers," no makeshifts of any kind. Yet it is a short-cut method, simply because every step is made so simple and clear, and the total cost averages only a few cents a lesson with your music and everything included.

When learning to play or sing is so easy, why continue to confine your enjoyment of music to mere listening? Why not at least let us send you our free book, absorbingly interesting, simply because it shows you how easy it is to turn your wish to play or sing into an actual fact? With it will be sent a Free Illustrated Folder that proves—better than words—how delightfully quick and easy it is to learn music by the famous Print-and-Picture method. Just now we are making a special short time offer that cuts the cost per lesson in two—send your name now, before this special offer is withdrawn. Simply use the coupon or send your name and address in a letter or on a postcard. Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.

PLEASE WRITE NAME AND ADDRESS VERY PLAINLY, so that there will be no difficulty about the booklet and folder reaching you.

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC
4011 Brunswick Bldg. New York City

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC
4011 Brunswick Bldg., New York City

Please send me your free book, "Music Lessons in Your Own Home," with the folder illustrating your easy Print-and-Picture method, also particulars of your Special Short-time Offer. I am interested in the following course:

_____
(Name of Instrument or Course)

Name _____
Please Write Plainly

Address _____

City _____ State _____

For Beginners or Advanced Pupils

Piano	Hawaiian Steel Guitar
Organ	Harmony and Composition
Violin	Sight Singing
Drums and Traps	'Cello
Banjo	Ukulele
Mandolin	Harp
Clarinet	Piccolo
Cornet	Trombone
Flute	Tenor Banjo
Saxophone	
Guitar	

Voice and Speech Culture
Automatic Finger Control

Thousands Write Like This:

"I am delighted to tell you how I am getting on with my lessons. Everything is so plain. I had been going to a teacher for about two months and could not seem to learn a thing. But how quick I understood your lessons."—Eliza Logan, Philadelphia, Pa.

"I have already earned enough with my mandolin to pay for the instrument and course of lessons. Have received many compliments upon my playing."—Lester Plettner, Forestville, Wis.

"Our little girl has been elected organist of the Junior Epworth League, of M. E. Church, South after taking your lessons—and at the age of 12 years. That is speaking well for your school."—J. G. Castle, Fulton, Mo.

"Have learned more about music and playing in the four lessons received from you than I expected to learn in six months."—U. S. Whitman, Washington, D. C.

"I am getting along better than I ever did with a teacher right with me." — Edna Brown, Springfield, Mass.

GET THIS WONDERFUL RING. If You Can Tell It From a Genuine Diamond Send It Back

These exciting, beautiful CORODITE diamonds positively match genuine diamonds in every way—same blazing flash and dazzling play of living rainbow fire. They, also, stand the diamond tests, including severe cold test of direct comparison. Lifetime experts need all their experience to see any difference. Prove this yourself.

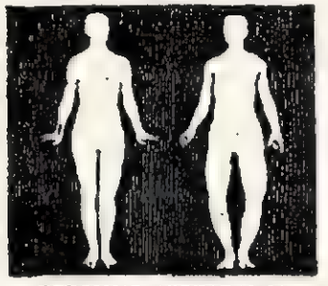
Wear a Corodite Diamond 7 Days Free

Make this test. You risk nothing. Wear a genuine Corodite and a diamond side by side on the same finger for 7 days. If you or your friends can tell the difference, send it back; you won't be out a single penny. That's fair enough. If you keep the ring, the price printed here is all you pay. No installments. Remember, Corodites alone have the same cutting as genuine stones.

No. 1—Ladies' Solitaire 14K Gold S. Ring . . . $2.84
No. 4—Ladies' Hand-Carved Basket Setting, plat. finish $3.96
No. 5—Ladies' Solitaire Bridal Bezeen Engraved . . $3.54
No. 7—Gents' Heavy Belcher 14K Gold S. Ring . . $7.68
No. 8—Gents' Massive Hand-Carved Octagon Grypey . $4.28
Carat disc cons. Beautiful mountings of most modern design. Choice of gold or latest white platinum finish. Unqualified 20-year guarantee. Handsome art-leather case free with each ring.

SEND NO MONEY Keep your money right at home. Just send name, address and number of ring wanted and size as shown by slip of paper, inking end to end around finger joint. Your ring will come by return mail. When ring arrives deposit amount shown above with postman. If you decide not to keep ring after 7 days' wear, send it back and your money will be immediately refunded. Send today.

E. RICHWINE CO.
19 W. Jackson Blvd., Dept. 812, Chicago, Ill.
Sole Importers Genuine Corodite Diamonds



PERSONAL APPEARANCE

is now more than ever the key-note of success. **Bow Legged and Knock-Kneed men and women,** both young and old, will be glad to hear that I have now ready for market my new appliance, which will successfully straighten, within a short time, bow-leggedness and knock-kneed legs, safely, quickly and permanently, without pain, operation or discomfort. Will not interfere with your daily work, being worn at night. My new "Lim-Straitner," Model 18, U. S. Patent, is easy to adjust; its result will save you soon from further humiliation, and improve your personal appearance 100 per cent.

Write today for my free copyrighted physiological and anatomical book which tells you how to correct bow and knock-kneed legs without any obligation on your part. Enclose a dime for postage.

M. TRILETY, SPECIALIST
807L, Ackerman Building, BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

NOW FIVE FOR $1.00 PREVENTS

HYGEE is a safe, instant, pleasing, convenient preventive for infectious diseases. Similar treatment used by Army and Navy. Special mail offer 5 full size tubes for $1.00. Play safe! Send us your order NOW.

Dept. E, HYGEE CHEMICAL CO.
811 Wyandotte St., Kansas City, Mo.

EARN MONEY AT HOME

YOU can make $15 to $60 weekly in your spare time writing show cards. No canvassing or soliciting. We instruct you by our new simple Directograph system, pay you cash each week and guarantee you steady work. Write for full particulars and free booklet.

WEST-ANGUS SHOW CARD SERVICE LIMITED
Authorized Capital $1,250,000.00
127 Colborne Building Toronto, Can.

A Five-Minute Tale
With a Powerful Climax

The Survivor

By EDWIN G. WOOD

AS THE two men lay on the sand that night, it seemed to John Binns that he could reach up over his head and pluck a handful of the coldly glittering stars, so near did they seem.

They were bright tonight; they tortured him, seemed to mock his suffering. There was one star that fascinated him. It was larger and brighter than the rest, and he lay staring at it until his eyes smarted.

He licked his dry lips, running his tongue between them, and cringed at the filelike rasp. He stole a look at his companion lying near, and slyly drew the canteen, with its fast-diminishing precious contents, to his mouth. He had no thought for his weaker companion, Dick Webb. When Dick could not suppress a groan, Binns'- close-set eyes narrowed and gleamed evilly, and he muttered imprecations against the frailer man.

He was angry with Webb. The two had had an argument concerning the world-old law of the survival of the fittest. He had contended that the law among men held the same as it did among the brute creation. The strong survived, the weak perished. Didn't all the big animals prey upon the smaller ones? Of course. Webb pointed out that brains were far superior to brute strength, and that brute strength frequently defeated its own purpose. His argument had been convincing enough to arouse the ire of Binns. He knew that Webb was his superior so far as intellect went, and it angered him. Well, he'd show the weakling that there was another way of taking care of yourself besides using physical strength—there was a foxlike cunning, that didn't require the brains that Webb seemed to think he had, either.

If it were not for that puny Webb, he, Binns, the stronger of the two, and therefore the more fit to live, might have a chance, a fighting chance, of getting out of the desert alive. They were lost. What food they had carried with them was gone, and the water running low. Water was the worst problem. The moisture of the body dries up rapidly in those hot sands.

Binns' tongue was rough, his throat beginning to ache, his lips to crack. The two men could not last much longer. One of them simply must be left there. Which one? Not Binns. He loved life too well to think of sacrificing it for a weakling, whom, in his opinion, the world would never miss—and Binns himself was normally a strong man.

Binns' fear of death was a morbid one. It was this fear that had led him from the beginning of their mishap to take craftily more than his portion of the water and give Dick less. It was all Dick's fault, anyway; for had he not gotten Binns into this fool's chase after gold? He cursed himself for having been so silly as to be led away from his former life where he had lived fairly well on what he could pick up by his wits.

The man at his side stirred, mumbled something in a half delirious way, then asked for water.

18 INCHES HIGH $2.95 BEAUTIFUL ELECTRIC READING LAMP

Here is the prettiest, daintiest table lamp you ever saw. Has beautiful **Polychrome** gold and rich colored base, and highly artistic Parchment shade decorated in assorted handsome designs and colors. Complete with socket, plug and 7 ft. cord.

Here is your opportunity to get a rich lamp that will beautify your home at only a small part of its regular price. Don't Pass By This Bargain. This lamp makes a fine gift. All who see it are delighted. **You Risk Nothing.**

Free Lamp Doily
SEND NO MONEY
Order No. 325

Order today, when lamp arrives pay Postman our bargain price, $2.95 plus postage.

If you are not more than pleased your money will be promptly returned. Send today.

EMPIRE LAMP CO.
20 E. Lake St., Dept. 133 CHICAGO

NEW TIRE PRICE $2 30X3½ CORD GUARANTEED 9 MONTHS AT HALF PRICE

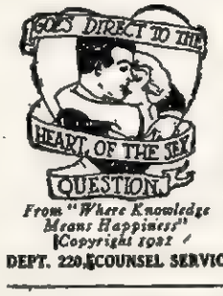
These tires readily give our customers thousands of miles of good service—these are GOODRICH, GOODYEAR, FIRESTONE, FISK—and other well known standard make used tires. The guarantee protects you. Greater service for less money. Satisfaction assured. Order season's supply now.

Lowest Tire Prices in America

	Tires	New Tubes		Tires	New Tubes
30x3	$1.90	$ .90	32x4½	$3.75	$1.65
30x3½	2.00	.90	33x4½	3.75	1.65
32x3½	2.50	.90	34x4½	4.00	1.65
31x4	2.75	.90	35x4½	4.25	1.65
32x4	3.00	1.40	36x4½	4.25	1.65
33x4	3.25	1.40	35x5	4.25	1.95
34x4	3.50	1.40	37x5	4.25	1.95

SEND ONLY $1 for each tire shipped. Balance C. O. D. —subject to inspection if ordered by express. Tires guaranteed 9 months. Another tire given at half price for any part perfectly satisfactory. 10 per cent discount if ordered in dozen lots. WRITE—RUSH ORDERS.

LOW PRICE TIRE CO., Box 724 Dept. 2511 **CHICAGO**



From "Where Knowledge Means Happiness" [Copyright 1922]

SEX

Facts other sex books don't dare discuss are plainly told in **"Where Knowledge Means Happiness."** Creates a new kind of married love. One reader says: *It contains more real information than all other sex books put together.*

Sent in plain cover, by return mail, for $1.00 cash, money order, check or stamps.

DEPT. 220, COUNSEL SERVICE, 257 W. 71st St., New York

FREE BRACELET WATCH

Rush your name and we will tell you HOW you can get this handsome 6-jewel 20-year guaranteed gold-filled Bracelet Watch **ABSOLUTELY FREE**

Bracelet Watch comes in an elaborate velvet box. Write at once for **FREE** Watch Plan.

HOME SUPPLY CO.
131 Duane St., Dept. 309, New York

TOBACCO HABIT CURED OR NO PAY

Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Full treatment sent on trial. Harmless. Costs $1.00 if it cures. Nothing if it fails. Used by over 400,000 men and women.

SUPERBA COMPANY L 4, BALTIMORE, MD.

Table of Contents

The contents of Weird Tales is fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. All communications should be addressed to the publishers main office at 854 North Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

DRACONDA 3
JOHN MARTIN LEAHY

THE CRAWLING DEATH 18
P. A. CONNOLLY

THE CLOSED ROOM 27
MAEBELLE McCALMENT

THE PHANTOM VIOLINIST 32
WALTER F. McCANLESS

LUCIFER 36
JOHN D. SWAIN

THE SPIDER 39
ARTHUR EDWARDS CHAPMAN

THE AMAZING ADVENTURE OF JOE SCRANTON 41
EFFIE W. FIFIELD

THE IRON ROOM 46
FRANCIS D. GRIERSON

PRISONERS OF THE DEAD 51
PAUL SUTER

THE DEATH PIT 57
OSCAR SCHISGALL

THE WAX IMAGE 67
BURTON HARCOURT

POISONED 69
FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

THE MAGIC MIRROR 73
MARY S. BROWN

THE INVISIBLE MONSTER 75
SONIA H. GREENE

THE PEBBLE PROPHECY 77
VALENS LAPSLEY

THE TELL-TALE HEART 80
EDGAR ALLAN POE

WEIRD CRIMES 81
SEABURY QUINN

THE EYRIE 85
THE EDITOR

THE SURVIVOR 94
EDWIN G. WOOD

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES apply to YOUNG & WARD, Advertising Managers, 168 North Michigan Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

"Here's an Extra $50!

"I'm making *real* money now! Yes, I've been keeping it a secret until pay day came. I've been promoted with an increase of $50 a month. And the first extra money is yours. Just a little reward for urging me to study at home. The boss says my spare-time training has made me a valuable man to the firm and there's more money coming soon. We're starting up easy street, Grace, thanks to you and the I. C. S."

To-day, more than ever before, money is what counts. You can't get along on what you have been making. Somehow, you've simply got to increase your earnings.

Fortunately for you there is an unfailing way to do it. Train yourself for bigger work, learn to do some one thing well, and employers will be glad to pay you real money for your special knowledge.

It is the *business* of the International Correspondence Schools to prepare men and women for better positions at better pay. They have been doing it for 31 years. They are training over 180,000 right now. They are ready and anxious to help you.

Here is all we ask—without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, simply mark and mail this coupon.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 7325, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation on my part, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Personnel Organization
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Business Law
☐ Banking and Banking Law
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
☐ Cost Accounting
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Spanish ☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Better Letters
☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Business English
☐ Civil Service
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ Illustrating

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ Railroad Positions
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Metallurgy ☐ Mining
☐ Steam Engineering ☐ Radio
☐ Architect
☐ Blue Print Reading
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Automobile Work
☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Mathematics

Name .....
Street Address 8-3-23
City ..... State .....
Occupation .....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

STEEL BLUE Elite Diamond
IF YOU CAN TELL IT FROM A DIAMOND SEND IT BACK!
$3.89 COD

1 Carat Elite Diamonds, Matchless for their dazzling rainbow brilliancy. You'll be delighted. Elite Rings Surpass all others. Stand acid and other tests. Handsomely Engraved Ring sterling guaranteed. Looks like $250.00. Proud owner offered $85.00 5 minutes after buying one.

Tie Pin and Cuff Links FREE With each ring order we give FREE beautiful combination Set Solid Roman finish Gold Set with small Elite Diamonds.

Send No Money Just send name, address and finger size. When ring arrives pay postman $3.89 and postage. Satisfaction guaranteed. Write today. Cash with Canadian orders.

ELITE JEWELRY HOUSE,
Dept. 209, 308 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Illinois

LADIES Free booklet describing our Home-Treatment remedies, etc., used by thousands of women. Enclose stamp. ACME SALES CO., DEPT. 18, Empire Bldg., Denver, Colo.

Binns sat up, his little eyes, that were set almost into the sides of his nose, glaring at Webb.

"You've had your share," he snarled.

"Water!" the weaker man croaked insistently, holding out a tin cup.

Binns would not permit the other to drink from the canteen; the risk of his getting more than his share was too great. Binns had carried through the bluff at economizing by pointing out to Dick that it was better to measure his allowance. He was scrupulous in doling out his own portion when Dick was looking, then later he always tapped the canteen on the sly. He carried the canteen containing what was left of the water, himself, under an apparently generous impulse—he was the stronger of the two, therefore the one to shoulder the most of the burden.

Dick again held out his cup in a trembling hand and demanded a drink.

"Hell!" snarled Binns.

He moved his hand impatiently toward the canteen, paused. Why should he waste the precious life-sustaining fluid on this half-dead man? He couldn't last, that was evident. Every drop that Dick drank now lessened Binns' chance of getting out. It was a sinful waste to pour water down the throat of a man so nearly gone. It would be much better to let the poor devil die and be done with it. It would be really a mercy to put him out of his misery. Of course it would. Nobody'd ever know the difference, and then Binns would

FAT

the ENEMY that is shortening Your Life

BANISHED!

By Neutroids—Dr. Graham's Famous Prescription

Superfluous fat over-burdens the heart and affects the lungs, kidneys, stomach and all other organs. Stout men and women are the easiest victims of pneumonia. Trivial maladies, such as ptomaine poisoning or bronchial infections, bring sudden and unexpected death to stout people where such a thing is unheard of when slender people are similarly affected. Realizing that obesity is a serious factor in shortening human life, Dr. R. Lincoln Graham, famous stomach specialist of New York, has devoted his life to finding a method for reducing obesity naturally without injury to the health of the patient in any way. Finally, after countless experiments in the laboratories of Europe and America, he developed and perfected his prescription known as NEUTROIDS.

FREE

Personal Mail Consulting Service by Dr. Graham's Staff

Any person taking Neutroids may feel free to call at the Sanitarium or write to Dr. Graham confidentially. Your letter will receive the personal attention of either Dr. Graham himself or a staff physician.

No Creams—No Baths—No Diet—No Exercise

The fat in your body is caused by a simple chemical process. Yeast cells in the stomach combine with the starch and sugar of your food, causing fatty tissues instead of healthy lean muscle. Neutroids counter-act the action of these yeast cells and immediately overcome the formation of fat at its very source. Neutroids then aid nature in dissolving fatty tissue accumulated over a long period. Dr. Graham has prescribed Neutroids for thousands of people suffering from overweight who have visited his sanitarium. He personally guarantees that his prescription will give satisfactory results and that it contains no thyroid extract or habit forming drugs and can be taken with safety by all.

NO DANGER
GUARANTEED HARMLESS

SEND COUPON ONLY—NO MONEY

Merely fill in and send this convenient coupon now. When the little packet of Neutroids arrives deposit purchase price with Postman. This will be refunded if you are not satisfied.

WHAT USERS OF NEUTROIDS HAVE TO SAY

Had tried everything

"I have tried everything on the face of the earth to reduce and nothing has done me any good but Dr. Graham's Neutroids." — Constance E. Harris, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Lost 5 pounds in one week

"In the first week's treatment of Neutroids I lost five pounds, lost my craving for food, feel lighter and more active."—Mrs. Madeline Gunther, New York City.

Lost 16 pounds in 2 weeks

"I lost sixteen pounds on the first two weeks' treatment and feel fine. I want to lose twenty-four pounds more." — L. G. Miller, Thermopolis, Wyo.

DR. R. LINCOLN GRAHAM, care of The Graham Sanitarium, Inc., 123 East 89th St., Dept. 671, New York City:—Send me two weeks' treatment of Neutroids which entitles me to free professional mail consulting service and free booklet on Obesity. I will pay postman $2 (plus 15c postage) on arrival in *plain package*. Money to be refunded if not satisfied.

Name.....Age.....Sex.....

Address.....Weight.....

POSES *from* LIFE

ETUDES ACADEMIQUES!

A new line of *Imported* Art Subjects in the *Nude* —Something *Never Sold Before in America*—A delight to Artists, Art Students, Lovers of Art

Art Photographs

Just the one size 7x9 all sepia soft toned prints. ACTUAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Art lovers should absolutely NOT be without this collection. We send mail prepaid miniature catalogue and 2 samples for $1—or 10 for $4.50—20 for $9—30 for $12—60 for $21—and 100 for $30.

ARS MINIMA GALLERIES 63 WASHINGTON SQUARE Dept. 8132, Greenwich Village, N. Y. C.

have a chance, a small chance of pulling through.

He had never killed a man. The thought of murder made him creepy. But this feeling was not born of any value he placed on the life of a fellow human. It was rather of the dread of punishment and a superstitious fear. He had heard of men who had taken life being ever after unable to sleep, the victim being always present in the slayer's imagination. All rot, of course, but the thought made his scalp prickle. But this would not be murder; it would simply be the old, old law of self-preservation—

Dick was becoming impatient in his demands for water.

"You haven't been playing fair, you swindling thief!" he finally cried out in a weak voice.

At the thought of his having been discovered, Binns' hot anger flared up as though the accusation had been unjust. Hate filled him, and his hand moved back, shot forward. A spurt of flame leaped out, and the pleading Dick slumped to the sand.

Binns, deathly sick now, mopped his face with a shaking hand, and stood staring dazedly at the thing on the ground; then he backed away.

"God!" he mumbled, as he looked in fascination at the huddled form. At last tearing his eyes from the horrible object, he turned and ran frantically, stumbling over the uneven ground, falling again and again; up again and on and on, until he fell exhausted.

He lay panting for some time, he did not know how long, with eyes wide open. After awhile he began to doze fitfully, only to awaken each time with a start, for the figure with the cup was always before him. He reenacted the scene time and again—the pleading man, the flash of the gun, the slow sinking to the ground of his companion.

At last he became calmer, got up and started on again. He hadn't any idea of which way he had been running; it might have been in a circle. That would never do. He must find something to go by. There was that bright star over there, the one that had fascinated him so, hanging above the horizon. If he kept toward that, he could at least keep a general course. Good old star! He'd follow it as long as it shone.

He staggered on. If only he could get rid of that infernal thing before his eyes, that huddled thing on the ground— But wouldn't he have been a fool to give away the water—wouldn't he? He had as good a right to his life as any other fellow. Sure! A better right than that thing he had left back there. It would have died, anyhow.

He stopped and stared, beginning to sweat. The faint shadows cast by the sand dunes assumed grotesque shapes. One of the smaller sand heaps looked like that thing—He leaned forward, peering intently. He could have sworn it moved. He laughed aloud. He was a fool to get the jumps that way. Then he stumbled on again. In his horror he had forgotten to drink, although his throat was torturing him. He imagined another one of those damnable shapes moved. He went forward and kicked at it savagely.

He went on again, staggering, half delirious, and growing weak in the knees. Suddenly he again stopped and stared. Still another shape. Well, he wouldn't be fooled this time. He staggered forward to kick it—The thing sat up and held out that intolerable cup.

Binns plunged forward and fell on his face. The shape crawled to his side, felt over him, searching for the canteen, finally found it, raised it to its lips and sucked at the contents, then tried feebly to turn the fallen Binns over to pour the few remaining drops of water down his throat. . .

At daylight a party of men found two bodies lying on the sand. A man stooped over one of them.

"This here guy," he said, "is breathin' yet. Looks like he'd been burnt with a bullet side o' his head. Ain't nothin' much the matter but starvation, though. Reckon we c'n bring him 'round all right. What about t'other one, Bill?"

Bill turned the other body over, face up. Two close-set little eyes stared up at the sky which they did not see.

"Couldn't be any deader," announced Bill. "'S funny, too," he went on musingly, "that this guy should be the first to peter out—he's a whole lot huskier'n t'other one."

WILL USE TEAR GAS ON BOOTLEGGERS

CHIEF of Police Truax and District Attorney Lovejoy of Fresno, California, recently received a supply of the wherewithal with which to make bootleggers weep. A consignment of tear gas bombs, guaranteed to wring tears from the most hardened criminal is to be used for the purpose of persuading reluctant liquor law violators to open their doors before taking time to destroy evidence.

AMAZING SALE

10 Volumes

de Maupassant

His Startling Stories—10 Full Size Volumes Beautifully Bound In Maroon Cloth—Short Time Offer.

49¢ per Volume

Biggest book bargain ever offered. We challenge anyone to produce the same set at this amazing price! Not pocket size books; not paper bound, not cheap in anything but price! Includes 17 stories never before printed in English, 201 short stories—5 big novels.

Maupassant, more than any other writer, dared to rip aside the veil of convention and tell the naked truth. He held the mirror up to nature—portraying life openly yet never making vice attractive—never passing judgment. His stories of Parisian high life, of the underworld, the Orient, the high seas, the jungles, are realistic; as delightfully human as they are bold.

Frankest of Frenchmen

Maupassant startled the world with his boldness and made humanity gasp because he wrote from first-hand observation and experience. The situations he created are true-to-life situations. His characters are real people—mostly young people—like those you see around you every day.

Maupassant stands alone as a creator of thrills—of a veritable tumult of emotion; a drama of startling contrasts; a train of closely-packed, swiftly moving episodes. He wasted no time flirting around the edges of life. And his stories are the most startling that ever came from a writer's pen!

Ideal Gift For Christmas!

Surprise your friends with this handsome 10 volume set of De Maupassant. Tasteful — inexpensive — brings joy all year 'round! Saves you money, time and worry. Order today before the few remaining sets are snatched up.

201 Short Stories —5 Novels

READ—
"The Son." A tale of passion, human weakness and sin. A delicate subject daringly handled.

READ—
"Lasting Love." The story of a beautiful girl-vagabond, who loved an aristocrat — who already had a wife.

READ—
"The Relic." Can we ever tell what a woman will do? She thought him a thief, a rogue, an engaging villain—and she loved him until—

READ—
"The Will." The story of a married woman who erred in loving another—and who vindicated herself from the tomb.

SEND NO MONEY!

Money-back Guarantee—Short Time Offer—Limited Edition.

This extraordinarily low-priced edition will go quickly. So act NOW! Just clip and mail the coupon below and the complete 10-volume set will be sent you at once.

When your set of Maupassant arrives deposit $1 with the postman. Read and examine the books at your leisure. See for yourself what an amazing publishing achievement this splendid set represents. Within the 5-day period either return the books and have your $1 refunded, or keep them and send us only $3.90 to complete the full payment. You alone are the judge.

You want this new Maupassant set. Act NOW before the present edition is exhausted. Send no money, but be sure to clip and mail the coupon today.

Thompson-Barlow Co.

Dept. D-1612

43 West 16th Street, New York City

Thompson-Barlow Co., Dept. D-1612
43 West 16th Street, New York City

You may send me, for five days' examination, the works of Guy de Maupassant in 10 volumes, containing 17 stories never before published in English. On delivery I will deposit $1 with the postman. Within five days I will either return the books and have my $1 refunded, or keep them and send you only $3.90 to complete the full payment. It is understood that all carrying charges are prepaid.

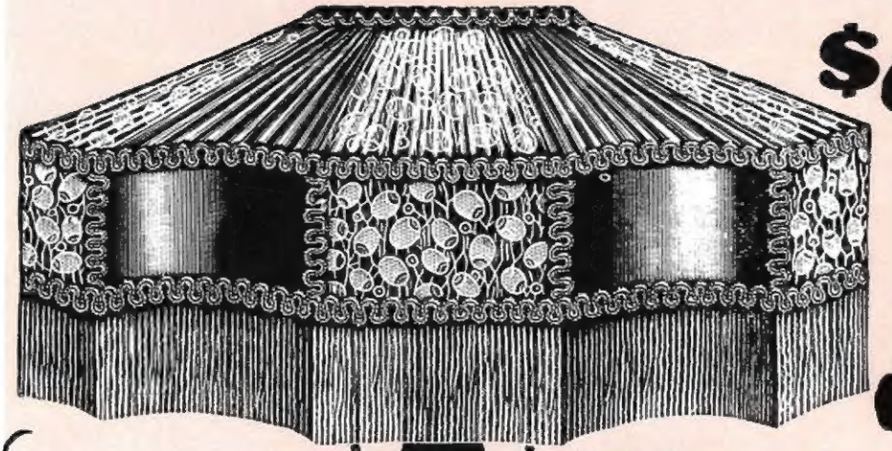
Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

If you prefer, you may send the $1.00 first payment with coupon.

[] For handsome leather binding check this square and pay postman $2.00 on delivery and $5.75 after the five days examination.



$1.00 Down

Brings This

Floor Lamp With 5th Ave. Silk Shade

Here is something you have always wanted—a beautiful floor lamp with handsome and elegant Fifth Avenue silk shade—to add an extra tone of elegance and luxury to your home. On this generous offer you can see just how this floor lamp and silk shade will look in your home, without risking anything. Send only $1.00 with the coupon below, and we will send it complete to your home on approval, equipped for use with either gas or electricity. We take all the risk.

30 Days Trial

When the lamp outfit comes, use it freely for 30 days. See how beautifully the colorings of the handsome silk shade blend and harmonize with everything in the home. How *useful* it is, too—so handy for reading, can be moved around with ease to furnish a beautiful light and rich warmth and coziness to any room in the house. If after 30 days trial you decide not to keep the lamp, just return it at our expense and we will refund your $1.00 deposit, plus any freight or express you paid. You cannot lose a single penny.

$2.00 a Month

If you discover that this lamp is a tremendous bargain at the price we ask and you decide to keep it, send only $2.00 a month until you have paid the total bargain price of $19.85. Yes, only $19.85 for this luxurious lamp and silk shade complete. Compare this value with anything you could buy locally at anywhere near the same price—*even for spot cash!* Straus & Schram gives you this bargain price and almost a year to pay. We trust honest people anywhere in U. S. No discount for cash; nothing extra for credit. *No C. O. D.*

Price Slashed!

Decide now to see this beautiful floor lamp and silk shade in your home on approval on this price smashing offer. Think how the nickels and dimes slip away for useless things; save them for something worth while that will give satisfaction for years. Send coupon with only $1.00 now! Satisfaction guaranteed.

Send Coupon NOW!

STRAUS & SCHRAM, Dept. 3936 Chicago, Ill.

Gas or Electric

The Lamp—

Comes equipped for choice of gas or electricity. Has 2-light Benjamin socket for electricity only, with 8-foot silk cord ready for use; or comes with 6-foot rubber hose, burner, mantle and chimney for gas.

Mahogany Finish

Standard is 60 in. high, 3 in. in diameter. Highly polished French mahogany finish.

The Shade—

Made in Fifth Avenue design, 24 in. in diameter, of delft blue silk, shirred top, alternating plain and fancy art silk panels. Twelve panels in all, tinsel braid border, with four inch Chenille fringe. American beauty shirred lining. The harmonious color scheme gives effect of red light shining through a blue haze—a rich warm light. Shipping weight, 27 pounds.

Marshall Silky Fringe Pull-Cords

Also pair of Marshall silky fringe cords with 3½ in. silky fringed tassels, giving an added luxurious effect.

For gas use, order by No. G6332NA.

For electricity, order by No. G6333NA.

Send only $1 with the coupon, $2 monthly. Total Bargain Price for lamp and shade, $19.85.

Free Bargain Catalog

Shows thousands of bargains in home furnishings: furniture, jewelry, rugs, curtains, phonographs, stoves, dishes, aluminum ware, etc. All sold on easy terms. Catalog sent free, with or without order. See the coupon.

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

STRAUS & SCHRAM Dept. 3937 CHICAGO

Enclosed find $1.00. Ship special advertised Floor Lamp and Silk Shade as checked below. I am to have 30 days free trial. If I keep the lamp, I will send $2.00 a month. If not satisfied, I am to return the lamp and shade within 30 days and you are to refund my $1.00 plus any transportation charges I paid.

☐ *Gas* Floor Lamp No. G 6332NA, $19.85.
☐ *Electric* Floor Lamp No. G 6333NA, $19.85

Name.....

Street, R. F. D. or Box No......

Shipping Point.....

Post Office..... *State*.....

If you want ONLY our free catalog of home furnishings, mark X here ☐